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THE EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT OF ADAM SMITH

by



NICHOLAS GEORGE COCCALIS

A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Educational Thought of Adam Smith" submitted by Nicholas George Cocalis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

ABSTRACT

Most thinkers in the western tradition who were concerned with their society were concerned, to a lesser or greater extent, with the education of its members. Their ideas on education reflected their views on man and society. If we accept the premise that "it is truly impossible to understand the philosophical outlook of these men without understanding their ideas about education,"¹ then we must accept a further premise, namely, that it is essential that we understand their concept of the ideal man. This is necessary if we wish to achieve a clear understanding both of the true aim of their educational ideas and recommendations and of their philosophical outlook.

No historian of education appears to have done this in the case of Adam Smith. The usual practice has been to make a reference to the fact that Smith, the strong advocate of laissez-faire, made an exception in the case of education and advocated government support for education without making an adequate attempt to explain the inconsistency. This thesis, therefore, proposes to examine Smith's views on education after considering his concept of the ideal man in the hope that such an approach might throw a clearer light both on his educational views and his philosophical outlook.

¹Nash, Paul, et al., The Educated Man, Wiley, N. Y. 1965, p. 2.

Smith has been criticized by some on the grounds that his ethical theory and his economic philosophy are fundamentally inconsistent. Many scholars, however, both among his contemporaries and among the modern have found no such inconsistency. It is, therefore, necessary for our purposes to deal first with the question of unity in Smith's thought.

No thinker can be completely divorced from his historical context and it is essential to give a background of relevant developments in the society of the thinker in question. This is all the more important here since it is hoped to show that most of Smith's recommendations on education were derived from such developments and from his personal experience in Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century.

After considering the view of the ideal man as it appears in Smith's ethical and economic theory, his arguments and recommendations on education will be examined in a way that would demonstrate both their consistency with the rest of his thought and their basic derivation from Smith's own experience.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, it is hoped to point out some affinities in Smith's educational thought with the thought of certain educational writers in England in the nineteenth century and to show that in educational practice it was his economic rather than his educational thought that exercised the greater influence.

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CHAPTER I

ADAM SMITH AND THE UNITY OF HIS THOUGHT

Adam Smith (1723-1790) lived in Scotland for most of his life during a period which has been described as the 'Augustan Age' of that nation. He grew up and received his early education in the small Scottish town of Kirkcaldy. After studies at the Universities of Glasgow and Oxford he was appointed Professor of Logic and then Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Glasgow in 1751. From 1763 to 1776 he was in France, as tutor of the Duke of Buccleuch, and in 1778 he was appointed Commissioner of Customs for Scotland.

Adam Smith's reputation rests on his classic work 'An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations', published in 1776, but he also wrote 'The Theory of Moral Sentiments', published in 1759, which first brought him into prominence. The 'Wealth of Nations' is one of the intellectual foundations of liberalism in the 19th century. It is concerned with matters of political economy but it also deals with other topics, such as education, since Smith's economic philosophy is part of his general philosophy about the nature of man and society. There are also references to education in his 'Theory of Moral Sentiments.'

In Book V, Chapter I, Part III, Articles II and III of the 'Wealth of Nations' Smith deals directly with matters of education. Referring to this concern with education, one

economic historian has stated that the inclusion of this topic in Book V "...was not...an afterthought. It lay at the root of the matter. Though there might be for reasons of policy, exceptions to Free Trade, or to Free Interest... there must be none to the freedom of educational enterprise. School, university, profession, are all tested on the same touchstone and only if they ring true to freedom do they pass the master test."¹

Curtis and Boultwood refer to Adam Smith as having made "a notable contribution...to educational thought in the 1760's..."² And further, although his "views on education were but incidental in the economic theory for which he is remembered", he was "a pioneer" in the movement in favour of an expansion of the school system.³

These are some opinions of economic and educational historians on Adam Smith's contribution to educational thought.

The career of Adam Smith lends itself to consideration from the educational point of view. As a professor at the University of Glasgow, from 1751 to 1763, he was also involved in administrative matters of that University. Deriving from this experience and from his experience as a

¹Fay, C. R., Adam Smith, University Press, Cambridge 1956, p. 55.

²Curtis, S. J. and Boultwood, M. E. A., A Short History of Educational Ideas, University Tutorial Press, London 1960, p. 257.

³Curtis, S. J. and Boultwood, M. E. A., An Introductory History of English Education since 1800, University Tutorial Press, London 1960, p. 43.

student at Oxford he expressed strong views on the state of university education in his time. His stay in France and his visit to Geneva brought him into direct contact with a number of Encyclopedists and Physiocrats. Indeed, throughout his life Smith moved among the highest intellectual and academic circles of his time.

Scottish thinking and education exerted considerable influence on the development of English education for over a century and Smith's views, according to an eminent British educationist, were to a great extent responsible for the support of primary education for the poor by the English Whigs.⁴ Smith's views and motives for the support of universal education have also been interpreted, however, as a hope, "...probably unconscious...", that education be used to inculcate submissiveness to government.⁵

The impact of his economic philosophy has been so great that his moral philosophy and his views of man, society and the role that the educational institutions are expected to play tend to be overlooked. While his influence on educational developments in the nineteenth century is acknowledged, little detailed study of his contribution from a theoretical point of view appears to have been made.

⁴Sadler, Sir Michael, The Philosophy Underlying the System of Education in England, Educational Yearbook 1929, International Institute of Teachers College, Columbia University, New York 1930, p. 32.

⁵Niebuhr, Reinhold, Moral Man and Immoral Society, Scribner, New York 1960, p. 121.

C. F. Arrowood wrote a monograph entitled 'Theory of Education in the Political Philosophy of Adam Smith' in 1945 but he seems to have paid little attention to what Smith had to say in his 'Theory of Moral Sentiments' with the result that his interpretation of Smith's views on education is inadequate.

A number of writers have stressed the importance of studying the 'Theory of Moral Sentiments' and the 'Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms', in addition to the 'Wealth of Nations', for a true appreciation of Smith's views. G. Morrow, for instance, demonstrates that the 'Wealth of Nations' was meant to be only part of a more general theory. "The 'Wealth of Nations' is not itself the comprehensive work which Adam Smith had in mind but only a limited part of it; and while we may admit that his range of interests included the whole field of social phenomena, we are forced to conclude that the 'Wealth of Nations' is an expression of only a limited part of those interests."⁶

Morrow supports this view by comparing a passage from the 'Wealth of Nations' with Smith's lectures on Jurisprudence which were taken down by a student in 1763 and were published in 1896 under the title 'Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue and Arms'. In the passage from the 'Wealth of Nations' Smith refers to the science of Political Economy as having two objects. The first of these is "to provide a plentiful

⁶Morrow, Glenn R., The Ethical and Economic Theories of Adam Smith, Cornell Studies in Philosophy No. 13, Longman's Green, New York, 1923, p. 59.

revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves", while the second object is to "supply the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services." Comparing this passage to his lectures on Jurisprudence it becomes clear that the 'Wealth of Nations' is an elaboration of Parts II and III of these lectures, since Part II covers the "principles of police, or public security, cleanliness and opulence" while Part III deals with the "principles of public revenue". (Parts I, IV, and V are entitled 'Of Justice', 'Of Arms' and 'Of the Laws of Nations', respectively.) Thus Political Economy is only one branch of what concerns the 'statesmen', a "branch of jurisprudence, which treats of the material welfare of political societies, under the twofold aspect of private and public wealth."⁷

The need for placing the 'Wealth of Nations' within the wider context of Smith's social thought is all the more important because of the apparent contradiction between the concept of the 'self' in the 'Wealth of Nations' and that expressed in the 'Theory of Moral Sentiments'. In the former, the individual is viewed as a selfish creature whose main concern appears to be the satisfaction of his material needs in the process of which he benefits his fellow men. "The natural effort of every individual to better his own

⁷Ibid., p. 60.

condition, when suffered to exert itself with freedom and security, is so powerful a principle that it is alone, and without any assistance, not only capable of carrying on the society to wealth and prosperity, but of surmounting a hundred important obstructions with which the folly of human laws too often incumbers its operations."⁸

In the 'Theory of Moral Sentiments', on the other hand, the individual 'sympathizes' with the feelings of others in society and thus imposes restraints upon himself. Indeed, Selby-Bigge points out that Smith anticipated a theory of 'social self', "a social self which enables us to effect not only an imaginary change of situation with the persons chiefly concerned, but with complete identification of our own person and character with that of another person."⁹ And this identification with others is not to be construed as a devious way of satisfying selfish interests since "how selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature which interest him in the fortunes of others and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it."¹⁰

⁸Smith, Adam, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Modern Library, Random House, New York, 1937, Bk. IV, Ch. V, p. 508.

⁹Selby-Bigge, L A., British Moralists, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1897, Dover N. Y. 1965, Volume I, Introduction p. lxi.

¹⁰Smith, Adam, The Theory of Moral Sentiments, Bohn, London 1853, Reprints of Economic Classics, Kelley, New York 1966, p. 3.

His contemporaries seem to have found no contradiction in the concepts expressed in the two works. Dugald Stewart, for example, referring to some introductory remarks he himself made in his 'Memoir on the works of Adam Smith' which was published in 1793, said that his remarks "tend to illustrate a connection between his system of commercial politics, and those speculations of his earlier years, in which he aimed more professedly at the advancement of human improvement and happiness."¹¹

Even before the publication of the 'Lectures' Sir Leslie Stephen, writing in 1876, found no contradiction between the view expressed in the 'Wealth of Nations' and the ideas suggested in the 'Theory of Moral Sentiments'. "In both treatises we are called upon to trace the workings of a kind of pre-established harmony. It is the fundamental proposition of the 'Moral Sentiments' that our natural sympathies impose upon us certain restraints. It is the fundamental proposition of the 'Wealth of Nations' that so long as those restraints are obeyed (for the existence of such virtues as honesty and peacefulness is as much assumed in one treatise as the other), the happiness of mankind will be promoted by allowing each man to obey his own instincts without authoritative interference."¹²

¹¹ Stewart, Dugald, Biographical Memoir of Adam Smith, Reprint of Economic Classics, A.M. Kelley, New York, 1966, p. 59.

¹² Stephen, Sir Leslie, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Murray, Third Edition, London 1902, Vol. II, p. 321.

This lack of authoritative interference attracted the attention of the liberal theorists. The views expressed in the 'Moral Sentiments', on which this freedom from governmental interference depended for its successful operation as a social system, were disregarded.

Thus the 'Adam Smith problem', which seemed to have preoccupied a number of scholars, was a fiction, as Morrow points out, due partly to the emphasis placed on the views expressed in the 'Wealth of Nations' and the neglect of Smith's ethical theory. The tendency was to regard the later views, expressed in the 'Wealth of Nations', as a change of earlier views instead of as complementary to them and part of a more general theory.¹³

It could be argued, perhaps, that there are various inconsistencies of a minor nature in sections of Smith's entire work. This may very well be the case since no writer who has expressed opinions in a vast range of subjects could altogether avoid such a pitfall. There is, however, one concept which from our point of view at least could allow for no contradiction or inconsistency in one's philosophical thought: it is the concept of the ideal man.

In Chapter III it is hoped to demonstrate the existence of such a consistency between Smith's ethical and economic theories. First, however, it is necessary to deal briefly with developments in Scotland during Smith's lifetime.

¹³Morrow, op. cit., pp. 5-11.

CHAPTER II

THE SCOTTISH EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CONTEXT

A. SCOTLAND IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY

a) Economic and Social Changes

Walking in the streets of Glasgow after 1750 must have provided proof of a new feeling of optimism that was beginning to prevail in the country. "Not a beggar was to be seen in the streets" and "the very children were busy", writes Gibson, the historian of Glasgow.¹ The city was still no more than a provincial town both in size and appearance, but by the middle of the 18th century it was beginning to experience the type of activity that turned Glasgow into one of the most important ports in Europe, and Scotland into a commercial nation; it was the sort of activity that helped Smith become the eminent economist that he was.

The first clear evidence of this development was the rapid rise of Glasgow as the main tobacco port in Britain. The Act of Union in 1707 opened the colonial markets to the Scots merchants and Glasgow's geographically advantageous location for trade became evident. This factor, coupled with the good commercial and banking facilities available and the restrictions imposed on colonial trade, made Glasgow very attractive as a European port of entry for the tobacco

¹Quoted by Rae, John, Life of Adam Smith, First published in 1895, reprinted in the series Reprints of Economic Classics by A. M. Kelley, New York, 1965, p. 89.

of the American and West Indian plantations and its transshipment to other parts of Europe. Imports and re-exports of tobacco more than doubled in both volume and value in less than twenty years.²

When the tobacco imports declined intense commercial and industrial activity had already been generated in other fields, especially in sugar refining, rum manufacturing and textiles, and such activity meant further commercial and financial expansion. For instance, between 1755 and 1800 exports of linen cloth increased nearly tenfold both in volume and in value.³ During the same period the value of all exports quadrupled.⁴

There were, of course, short-term fluctuations during that period of nearly 50 years but the long-term effect was to change the face of Scotland in the century that followed. The commercial excitement and feeling of expanding opportunities seems to have prevailed throughout the country. A correspondent in the 'Scots Magazine' wrote at the time: "A spirit of industry and activity has been raised and now pervades every order of men, while schemes of trade and improvement are adopted and put into practice, the undertakers of which would, in former times, have been denominated madmen."⁵

²Hamilton, Henry, An Economic History of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1963, Appendix IX, p. 416.

³Ibid., Appendix VII, pp. 412-413, and Appendix VI, pp. 410-411.

⁴Ibid., Appendix VII, pp. 414-415.

⁵Quoted in Kettler, David, The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson, Ohio State University Press, 1965, p. 16.

The changes were by no means confined to the industrial and commercial sectors. Changes in agriculture started early in the century. Interest in farming improvements resulted in the founding of the 'Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland' to be followed later by other organizations such as the Highland and Agricultural Society in 1784.

The intensified commercial and industrial activity coupled with a series of bad harvests after 1763 led to a steady rise in food prices. Enclosures, cattle raising and sheep farming, new methods and the use of new equipment became more widespread as farmers realized their importance in reducing costs of production and increasing net revenue. Furthermore, suitable legislation was also passed making the financing of such improvements possible.⁶

Such commercial and agricultural expansion had its effect on the traditional social structure and the distribution of population. One evidence of this is seen in the figures for the occupations of fathers of matriculated students at the University of Glasgow.⁷ These figures, though not conclusive, show that in the decade 1740-9, 26.2 percent of those students who gave the occupation of their fathers listed that occupation under "Industry and Commerce". In the period 1790-9 that percentage had risen to 49.9%.

⁶Ibid., p. 71.

⁷Mathew, W. M., 'The Origins and Occupations of Glasgow Students 1740-1839', Past & Present, No. 33, April, 1966, pp. 78-80.

More substantial evidence of social change is provided by the figures for population movements. Together with an overall increase in population from 1,265,380 in 1755 to 1,599,068 in 1801,⁸ there was a growth in urbanization and concentration of population in areas of industrial growth. The most rapid growth took place in the two main cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. In Glasgow the population grew from 27,451 in 1755 to 77,385 in 1801, while in Edinburgh it grew from 52,720 to 82,560 for the same period.⁹

These were briefly the economic, agricultural, social and demographic changes in Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century. In addition to these, however, other changes less easily accountable in terms of statistical data but just as pervasive and just as significant in the country's development were also taking place. Specifically, important changes were to be seen in the intellectual climate, the Church and Education.

b) Changes in the intellectual climate and the church.

The eighteenth century was significant for Scotland not only for the social and industrial developments which occurred at that time but also for the achievements in the intellectual and literary fields.

⁸Hamilton, op. cit., Appendix I, p. 395.

⁹Pryde, G. S., Scotland from 1603 to the Present day, Edinburgh 1962, p. 141.

The century opened with the country "almost devoid of literature". This intellectual and literary stagnation was due to a number of factors.¹⁰ Until the Union with England in 1707, Scotland was beset with political, ecclesiastical and economic problems which absorbed the attention and energy of its population. There were conflicts between Whigs and Tories, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Jacobites. There were commercial and trade quarrels with England and the standard of living was depressingly low for all social classes. Perhaps the strong influence of a Calvinistic Church was the greatest factor in the dearth of literary activity: "Most depressing of all was the burden of religious tyranny--the gloom with which mirth was checked, the discouragement given to all worldly entertainments--in song, in fiction, or in play--the censures levelled at all who indulged in profane literature, against which ministers inveighed and the pious frowned."¹¹

With the Act of Union the centre of political activity moved from Edinburgh to Westminster and many of the political and economic pressures were eased. Together with the economic and social changes that began towards the middle of the eighteenth century there was an increase in interest in learning and the literary pursuits.

¹⁰Graham, H. G., Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, A. & C. Black, London, 1901, pp. 1-2.

¹¹Ibid., p. 3.

During the first half of the eighteenth century Scottish prose "shows a markedly practical strain".¹² This practical strain, as well as the concern with human nature and realism by the Scottish intellectuals, is reflected in the fields of study which were the most popular. These fields were philosophy, history and law.

The pioneer in philosophy during the 'Scottish Enlightenment' was Frances Hutcheson who published his 'Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue' in 1725. This work and his 'Essay on the Passion and Affections' won him the Chair of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow in 1730.¹³ It was there that Smith, as a student, first came into contact with Hutcheson and his philosophy.

The outstanding and dominant figure was, of course, David Hume. His thinking, with its "pronounced strain of atheism, ...intrigued those who were like-minded" and was "a challenge to the divines and a scandal to many simple folk."¹⁴ The "like-minded" who were "intrigued" were to be found in the circle of intellectuals to which he belonged. They were by no means in complete agreement with him. Hume was "the lion of the group and they made lion-hunting their favourite sport. While they never

¹²Pryde, op. cit., p. 110.

¹³Graham, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁴Pryde, op. cit., p. 111.

caught him, the hunt was worthwhile--productive of much muscle and a good deal of other game."¹⁵

That intelligentsia included people from a variety of fields. In addition to Hume, there was Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson and Thomas Reid, all three professors of Moral Philosophy; William Robertson, a historian; Lord Kames and Lord Monboddo, judges and writers on legal and social philosophy; John Home, a playwright; Hugh Blair, a rhetorician and professor of 'Rhetoric and Belles Letres'.

These and other individuals were products of an 'intellectual awakening' that began in the Scottish universities in the first half of the eighteenth century. These men read widely and seriously. In addition to the ancient classical works, "they read the English philosophers--Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley and Shaftesbury; they kept abreast of French developments and knew Voltaire, Rousseau, Holbach, Helvetius and Montesquieu; they worked on scientific writings especially those of Newton; a considerable proportion (particularly among the lawyers) studied in Holland for a year or two, and others, too read Grotius and Pufendorf; and all prided themselves on their good taste as they read Shakespeare and Milton, Racine and Corneille."¹⁶

¹⁵Kettler, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 35.

Few among these writers and scholars were original thinkers but the depth of their scholarship and the width of their vision gained them national and international reputations. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to claim that "compared to London and all other European capitals, eighteenth-century Edinburgh stands second only to Paris in intellectual achievement".¹⁷

This change in the intellectual climate of eighteenth-century Scotland inevitably affected the Church. In the second half of that century men of moderate views came to dominate the Church in Scotland after a long period of puritanical and Calvinistic influence. These 'Moderates', as they were called, were ministers who did not preach with puritanical fervour but appealed instead to common sense in a manner befitting that quality. They did not deplore material progress but encouraged and supported improvements. Instead of concentrating their studies on the scriptures alone they read widely and mingled easily and freely with the intellectual and social elites.

Due partly to the fact that these 'moderate' elements came to dominate the Church there appears to have been some tempering in the puritanical tone of the Church in Scotland during that period. Although the "reign of moderates" came to an end by the beginning of the nineteenth century their influence was felt deeply in the Scottish Church. "Evangelical ministers of the old school abounded in the Church to leaven the arid Moderatism, their teaching

¹⁷Ibid., p. 40.

drearily doctrinal, their discipline still severe and vigilant; yet from the finer Evangelical clergy came teaching which in its mild tone and benign spirit was a strange contrast to that of an older generation. All ecclesiastical life had vastly altered when the century closed."¹⁸

In the first two sections of this chapter some indication was given of the important economic, industrial and social developments that were taking place in Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century; in addition, some evidence was produced which shows the fundamental changes in the intellectual climate and the moderation in the tone of the Church which took place at that time. All these changes were reflected, to a greater or lesser extent, in the developments which took place in the educational field.

c) Changes in Education

In the field of education the 'Act for Settling of Schools', which was passed in October 9th, 1696, is generally regarded as the foundation stone of the education system in Scotland which lasted until 1872. The Act reflected largely the views of the Presbyterian Church and the ideas of John Knox on education. In his 'Book of Discipline', published in 1560, John Knox advocated that

¹⁸Graham, H. G., Social Life in Scotland in the Eighteenth Century, A and C Black, London, 2nd ed., 1950, pp. 362-4.

education at the lowest level be given compulsorily to all and freely to those who could not afford it. At the higher, secondary, level education should be available to all, compulsory for those chosen to pursue it on the basis of ability and free for those compelled who were impecunious.

On the question of curriculum John Knox recommended catechism and the "first rudiments" for the lowest levels. He also suggested the establishment of Grammar schools in burghs and large parishes that would provide instruction in Logic, Rhetoric, Greek, Latin and Literature.

The 'Act for Settling of Schools' decreed that a school be set up in every parish with public support. Its implementation was aided by the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (S.S.P.C.K.) which was founded in 1709 by Royal Charter. The Society was supported by voluntary contributions and its stated object was to increase "piety and virtue within Scotland, especially in the highlands, islands and remote corners, where idolatry, error, superstition and ignorance were alleged most to abound on account of the largeness of parishes and the scarcity of schools."¹⁹

The efforts met with some success and by 1732 schools had been established in 109 parishes, even though by 1758 there were still 175 Highland parishes without a school.

¹⁹Knox, H. M., Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Scottish Education, 1696-1946, Edinburgh 1953, pp. 5-7.

An expansion of this education to cover, in addition to the three Rs and catechism, some vocational education was allowed by an extension of the original charter in 1738. Although conditions were not much better in the Lowlands, in these areas, at least, "the teaching of the church was much more effective and widespread...and the incidence of private and unofficial schools much greater."²⁰

By the middle of the eighteenth century the parish school system was well established. The parish school combined the elementary and secondary levels and provided free education for all classes. It was co-educational but the avenue to higher education it provided was available only to boys since the Universities were closed to women.

The burghs were not included in the parish school system. There the educational institution was the Grammar or Burgh School which was under local control, although the Church claimed the right to voice its opinion about appointments. In these schools the curriculum was classical with a strong emphasis on Latin. In the large Grammar schools Latin was the only subject taught, mainly because of the influence of the Universities, but in some smaller Grammar schools in remote burghs such subjects as French, mathematics, drawing and navigation were taught.²¹

²⁰Ibid., pp. 7-9.

²¹Ibid., p. 12.

This, then, was the general state of education in Scotland in the middle of the 18th century. There was a fairly universal network of schools which provided, however inadequately, the opportunity for literacy for most of the population. On the one hand, the parish school reflected mainly the concern of the established church for the spiritual well-being of the citizens. On the other hand, the burgh schools with their classical curriculum were more closely identified with the type of education that was preparatory to the pursuit of knowledge at the University level.

Throughout this educational system the dominant influence was presbyterian. In many areas the only educational outlet for all children was the religion-dominated protestant school. "In spite of all hindrances, inconveniences and difficulties the influence of the catechist-teachers and schoolmasters was felt even in districts wholly Catholic. The Church of Rome lacking force, failed to establish more than a few schools."²²

The wider changes that occurred in Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century had their effect on the course of Scottish education. The main effect was the demand for a more 'practical', 'useful' education. In the Highland parishes some effort was made in 1755 to establish spinning schools but by 1774 there were still only twelve such schools, rising by 1796 to ninety-four

²² Mason, J., 'Scottish Charity Schools of the Eighteenth Century', The Scottish Historical Review, Vol. XXXIII, No. 115, April 1954, p. 8.

with an enrollment of 2,350 students, mainly girls.

In the burghs this movement towards a more 'practical' education became evident with the rise of the Writing or Commercial schools. There the subjects taught were book-keeping, arithmetic and sometimes mathematics. Such a school appeared as early as 1723 in Dumfries and was followed by others later. This movement was also reflected in the reorganization of the curriculum of the already existing grammar schools. In the case of Ayr in 1746, for instance, this meant the addition to the classical curriculum of such 'practical' courses as mathematics, navigation, surveying, natural philosophy and book-keeping.²³

The most characteristic development in the second half of the eighteenth century, however, is the founding of the 'Academy'. The first of these was established in Perth in 1761 where a "petition to the town council put a cogent case for the advantages of science against the grammatical knowledge of dead languages and skill in metaphysical subtleties."²⁴ The non-classical character of these schools is shown by the almost complete absence, in most of them, of provisions for the study of languages. All subjects were taught in English and such subjects included mathematics, natural science, astronomy, physics, English civil history, religion and, occasionally, geography and French.²⁵

²³Knox, op. cit., p. 13.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 13-14.

²⁵Ibid., p. 14.

In many cases the local Grammar school was amalgamated with the Academy which meant that the latter acquired, in this way, a classical department. In some cases, as at Dundee High School, such amalgamation created "a loose ungovernable federation...which had eight 'sides' each under its own quite independent master." This led to "indefensible anomalies" amounting, in effect, to the students enrolling not just to one school "but in several which happened to occupy the same site, paying fees to each and taking their pick of the courses."²⁶

This arrangement also involved an element of competition among the teachers. Thus, "if the English master chose to give cut-price arithmetic lessons there was nothing the mathematics master could do about it except to give cut-price Latin lessons at the expense of the Classics master."²⁷ There is no indication, however, that this was a universal practice.

These schools were, generally, established by public subscription and were not managed by the town council but by separate bodies in which the town council was sometimes represented.²⁸

Earlier in the century the parishes and the burghs had demonstrated a "remarkable jealousy of any interference

²⁶Kerr, A.J.C., Schools of Scotland, Maclellan, Glasgow, 1962, p. 24.

²⁷Ibid., p. 24.

²⁸Knox, op. cit., p. 14.

with (their) monopoly...as the sole legal dispenser of knowledge." And whenever this monopoly appeared to be seriously challenged then the warning was issued "that no child above 6 or 7 be taught even music in any room, except parish and burgh schools."²⁹ The founding and the method of financing of the Academies in the second half of the eighteenth century provides evidence in support of Graham's affirmation that "it was not until toward the end of the century that a less exclusive policy began to prevail, and even small grants were then given to private schools."³⁰

Such developments in education clearly reflected the fundamental economic, social and other changes taking place in that period. Yet, these developments were not being introduced at a revolutionary pace and should not be interpreted as indicating a total decline in the influence of the Church. Its influence was still dominant in the educational system and continued to be exerted after the turn of the century as indicated by the provisions of the Parochial Schoolmasters (Scotland) Act of 1803. The Act maintained the influence of the Church by giving the presbytery the power to appoint and dismiss teachers who were "required to sign the Confession of Faith and the formula of the Church of Scotland".³¹ Furthermore, with

²⁹Graham, 'Social Life', op. cit., p. 442.

³⁰Ibid., p. 442.

³¹Knox, op. cit., p. 24.

the rapid expansion of urban areas there was a growing shortage of schools and it was the Church that took steps to supply elementary schools in urban districts which lacked them.³²

In higher education also there was some evidence of the effects of the changing demands on education, especially in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Since Smith was personally involved in these changes they will be dealt with in Chapter IV of this thesis.

There appears to have been little in the way of post-secondary technical education. There were as yet no Mechanics' Institutes and the only efforts in that direction were made by the faculty of the University of Glasgow, during Smith's term and later. More particularly these efforts were made by John Anderson, Professor of Natural Philosophy, who gave lectures to artisans at the University. Anderson left instructions in his will for the establishment of an Institute for the education of artisans and this resulted in the founding of the Andersonian Institution of Glasgow in 1796. Anderson's work will be referred to again in Chapters IV and V in connection with Adam Smith's personal experience.

In conclusion, the second half of the eighteenth century in Scotland was clearly a period of change in nearly every field. In education the change was evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Although there

³²Ibid., pp. 24-25.

was an increased demand for a 'practical' education and the commercial and industrial changes were comparatively rapid, the changes in education do not appear to have kept up fully with that demand. The influence of the Church was not removed but only 'moderated', the curriculum changes were by no means universal and the provision of the Act of 1696 for a school in every parish was not strictly imposed, with the result that education in many areas of the country was solely in the hands of the Church and the S.S.P.C.K.

It was in this environment of rather rapid commercial and industrial change, the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, and the comparatively slow change in the organization and content of education that Adam Smith made his career and developed his thought. In his ethical, economic and educational thought Smith reflected these changes and was regarded as a progressive individual who represented the wave of new ideas in his country. It is the position that Smith held among his contemporaries that must be briefly examined next.

B. ADAM SMITH AMONG HIS CONTEMPORARIES

On his return from Oxford Smith settled in Edinburgh. There he was certain of influential introductions through friends of his late father. His father, who died just before his son's birth, had been a Judge Advocate for Scotland and had served as private secretary to the Earl of Loudon and as Comptroller of Customs at Kirkcaldy.³³

³³Rae, op. cit., pp. 21-22 and pp. 1-2.

In Edinburgh Smith gave a series of lectures on literary topics and this gave him the opportunity to become better known. He mingled with Scotland's literary society which seems to have accepted him without difficulty. He had friends among the 'Moderates' of the Church: "Adam Smith's circle, with barely an exception, was Protestant and Hanoverian--the memory of John Knox was stronger than the presence of Charles Stuart. Protestant yet liberal; for who could be more liberal than John Home, Alexander Carlyle and Hugh Blair, all three ministers of religion?"³⁴

Scott³⁵ lists a number of prominent individuals who were close friends of Smith and some of whom, as Smith's students, were directly influenced and encouraged by him. From early school days there was John Oswald, Bishop of Raphoe; Robert Adam, the famous architect; John Drysdale, twice Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; Patrick Ross and David Skene, both of whom distinguished themselves in the army and reached the rank of General. In Edinburgh there was David Hume, the philosopher whose friendship Smith cherished throughout life in spite of the strong criticism and unpopularity that Hume faced; Alexander Wedderburn, whose early legal studies Smith encouraged and who later became Lord Chancellor of England; William Johnstone, who entered

³⁴Fay, op. cit.,

³⁵Scott, op. cit., pp. 101-102.

Parliament and who, as Sir William Pulteney, led a very influential and active public life; George Johnstone, brother of William, who became Governor of Florida. Younger men who, as students, came under the influence of Smith include Henry Herbert who achieved success in politics and was made Earl of Carnarvon and Henry Erskine who became well-known as lawyer and Dean of the Faculty of Advocates.

Smith's record as a Professor at Glasgow appears to have been a very active and successful one. Two of his biographers, Rae and Scott, provide much evidence of his success as a lecturer, scholar and administrator.³⁶ He was, apparently, particularly useful in dealing with matters of public relations which demanded a great deal of diplomatic handling, such as in negotiations with the Town Council. He was a popular lecturer and was favourably compared to Hutcheson, his teacher and predecessor in the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, who was an exceptionally impressive lecturer. With the publication of his 'Theory of Moral Sentiments' Smith's reputation spread to the Continent and the eminent physician and friend of Voltaire, Dr. Tronchin, sent his son from Geneva to Glasgow with the expressed purpose of having him study under Smith.³⁷

³⁶Rae, op. cit., Chapters V and VI; Scott, op. cit., Chapters VI and VII.

³⁷Rae, op. cit., p. 59.

Smith, however, was not popular with everyone and in some quarters he was regarded with suspicion. He was, after all, a friend of "Hume the atheist" and demonstrated a certain lack of enthusiasm for religious subjects. Thus, he did not follow Hutcheson's example of conducting a Sunday class on Christian evidences; he often smiled during divine service in the College chapel and the opening prayers which he was obliged to give at the start of each of his lectures were thought to "savour strongly of natural religion."³⁸

While at the University of Glasgow and long before he published the 'Wealth of Nations' Smith spoke frequently and persuasively on the advantages of free trade to the merchants of that city and before he left he had succeeded in converting many leading merchants to his views.³⁹

The 'Wealth of Nations' met with a favourable reception. David Hume found that the book had "depth and solidity and acuteness";⁴⁰ Edward Gibbon thought that Smith had "enriched the public" with "an extensive science in a single book";⁴¹ Adam Ferguson expressed the view that Smith's work was bound to influence future generations.⁴²

³⁸Ramsay, Scotland and the Scotsmen, i. 462, 463; Quoted in Rae, op. cit., p. 60.

³⁹Rae, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 286.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 287.

⁴²Fay, op. cit., p. 84.

A few years later approval came from a source whose vested interests Smith had amply criticized. In 1785 he foresaw "bad consequences" from the then recent establishment of Chambers of Commerce and Manufacture. Yet by 1790 the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce had given "the fullest endorsement of his policy that was to be given by any body of business during the next 30 years."⁴³

No author could aspire to a greater conquest among policy makers than that of the Prime Minister himself. When Smith went to London in 1789 he was consulted by William Pitt on matters of policy.⁴⁴ In 1792 Pitt rose in the House of Commons and paid tribute to Smith for furnishing "the best solution to every question connected with the history of commerce or with the system of political economy."⁴⁵

Robert Burns, Scotland's national poet, thought that Smith was an extraordinary man.⁴⁶ Edmund Burke spoke with "the warmest admiration of Smith's vast learning, his profound understanding, and the great importance of his writings."⁴⁷

⁴³Ibid., p. 36.

⁴⁴Rae, op. cit., p. 406.

⁴⁵Quoted by Fay, C. R., Great Britain from Adam Smith to the present day, Longmans Green, Toronto 1928, p. 16.

⁴⁶Thornton, R. D., James Currie, the Entire Stranger, and Robert Burns, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh 1963, pp. 274-275.

⁴⁷Bisset's Life of Burke, ii. 429, quoted by Rae, op. cit., p. 389.

There is one associate with whom Smith was not, apparently, always in good terms. Smith and Ferguson accused each other of plagiarism on some points and from all accounts it appears impossible to decide who is to be credited with the ideas in question. It could be that such accusations were due to a clash of personalities. In the literary circle of Edinburgh there were often "little tifts" and Alexander Carlyle informs us that responsible for these was often Ferguson with his "great jealousy of rivals", especially of Hume, Smith and Robertson. But Smith also had a "little jealousy in his nature" although he was also a man of "unbounded benevolence".⁴⁸ In any case, their relations were by no means always cool for when Smith was lying in his death-bed Ferguson went to him in friendship even though he himself was not in good health.

It was the professional and social contacts as well as the reputation that Smith established for himself both in Edinburgh and in Glasgow which eventually led to his appointment, in 1763, as tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch and the opportunity to travel in France and Switzerland. A travelling tutorship at that time had no element of servility attached to it and seems to have been a much sought-after post among professors.

In France Smith mingled with the highest social circles and attended all the famous literary salons of

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 433.

the day. He met Turgot, Quesnay, Necker, d'Holbach, Helvetius, Diderot, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, the Abbe Morellet. The latter, a metaphysician and economist, states in his 'Memoires' that he discussed with Smith some economic issues "and various points in the great work which Smith was then meditating." Morellet's opinion of Smith was high: "I regard him as one of the men who have made the most complete observations and analyses on all questions he treated of"; and, as Rae points out, Morellet proved his high opinion by translating the 'Wealth of Nations' into French himself.⁴⁹

Smith met with Voltaire several times in Geneva but there is no record of any opinion that the latter may have expressed about Smith. Rae informs us that "there was no living name before which Smith bowed with profounder veneration than the name of Voltaire, and his recollections of their intercourse on these occasions were always among those he cherished most warmly."⁵⁰

After his return from France Smith moved between Scotland and London where he was often in the company of Gibbon and Burke. After the publication of his 'Wealth of Nations' Smith was appointed Commissioner of Customs in Scotland. This appointment may have been partly due to the influence of the Duke of Buccleuch but it must have been also a reward for suggesting new sources of revenue

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 201.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 189.

in his book which Lord North, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer as well as Prime Minister, used in his budget of 1778.⁵¹ With this appointment Smith settled in Edinburgh where he continued to be active in the intellectual life of Scotland. In 1783 he helped in the founding of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He died in 1790.

C. CONCLUSION

Much has been made of Smith's contacts with the Physiocrats and the Encyclopedists in an effort to assess the extent of his indebtedness to their ideas. It would, indeed, have been most unusual if frequent and even fervent exchange of ideas did not actually occur during Smith's meetings in France. Smith, however, did not agree with all the views expressed by the Physiocrats and, furthermore, he first expressed his views on the importance of freedom from economic restraints and the true nature of wealth before Quesnay wrote similarly in 1756.⁵²

There is little doubt also that his contacts with Hutcheson, Hume, Ferguson and others affected his line of thought. Yet, like them, Smith developed his thought in an environment of change and, as was the case with them, his views reflected the conflict of ideas that was generated by the changes that were taking place.

More so than most of them, Smith was concerned with specific, concrete issues of public policy. A perfunctory

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 320-321.

⁵²Ibid., p. 216.

examination of the index in his 'Wealth of Nations' should be evidence enough: Alien merchants taxed; America, the cost of labour in; Apprenticeships, in England, Scotland, France; Balance of trade; Banks, effects of the optional clauses in the Scots notes; Cattle, the price of, rises in Scotland in consequence of the union with England; Corn, the free importation of; Taxes; Turnips; Turnpikes; Velvet, prohibition of importation of; Venison, the price of; Wales, stone quarries afford no rent; Wool, causes in the diminution in price.

All such issues were discussed within a framework of a philosophy of 'laissez-faire' and in many cases served as illustrations in his advocacy of such a philosophy. It is with the motive of examining the functions, financing and expenditures of government, that Smith considers some educational issues. This is why he included most of what he has to say on education in Book V of his 'Wealth of Nations' which is entitled 'Of the Revenue of the Sovereign or Commonwealth' and deals with public finance.

In view, then, of Smith's experience as a student and professor and his concern with practical issues of policy it is not unreasonable to suggest two points: first, that most of what Smith had to say on education was derived from practical issues and his personal experience rather than from the ideas of another educational theorist. Secondly, that his views on education are generally consistent with his economic and ethical philosophy.

It might be argued that both the above points could be determined simply by a look at the index of the 'Wealth of

Nations'. This, however, would be inadequate partly because Smith seldom becomes explicitly personal in his writing; for instance, although he criticized the practice of the 'grand tour' he never mentioned his own experience as tutor to the Duke of Buccleuch during the latter's tour of France and Switzerland. It would also be inadequate because some of his educational theory is to be found in some of his other writings which are of a less empirical nature; as an example, what could be described as his views on moral education are to be found mostly in the 'Theory of Moral Sentiments'.

Furthermore, a consistency between his educational views and his views on the individual in society would tend to strengthen the argument that he based his educational opinions on his own philosophy rather than on the views of another theorist.

A hypothetical index of educational issues which influenced Smith would include the movement away from the religion-oriented courses; the introduction of 'practical' courses; industrialization, urbanization and education; the competition among teachers and schools; the existence of a public education system and its monopolistic tendencies; the existence of four universities for a population, at that time, of less than 1,500,000; and the provision of university courses in natural philosophy to working-men in Glasgow.

These are some of the practical issues in education that influenced Smith's ideas. Before examining these

ideas in detail it is necessary to discuss his view of the ideal man and society in his ethical and economic philosophy.

CHAPTER III

THE VIRTUOUS MAN IN SMITH'S ETHICAL AND ECONOMIC THEORIES

The question of continuity in Smith's thought has already been mentioned. What the present chapter will attempt to do is to show the consistency that exists in Smith's idea of the man of virtue in his ethical and economic theories. Before proceeding with this, however, it is necessary to establish a continuity between Smith's thought and the thought that preceded his and from which he derived and developed the basis of his theories in ethics and economics.¹

In his moral philosophy Smith attempts to supply a basis for a non-metaphysical explanation of human behaviour in society. Such a preoccupation was common to all the significant British moralists at that time. The origins of that concern can be traced back to Locke's concept of individualism. By distinctly separating the individual from the society and by dealing with social relations in terms of separate, isolated individuals, Locke provided the ground for much speculation as to the nature of the individual and the true motivation for the individual's

¹For a detailed account of the discussion which follows in this introduction see: Selby-Bigge, L. A., British Moralists, first published in 1897, reprinted by Dover Publications, N. Y., 1965, Vol. I, pp. xi-lxiii, also Morrow, Glenn R., The Ethical and Economic Theories of Adam Smith, Monograph, Cornell Studies in Philosophy No. 13, Longmans Green, N. Y., 1923, Ch. I, pp. 12-27 and Morrow, G. R., 'Adam Smith: Moralist and Philosopher', Adam Smith, 1776-1926, J. M. Clark et. al., A. M. Kelley, 1966, pp. 156-179.

actions. Thus, Hobbes and Mandeville stressed man's self-interest as the true motivating force while others, such as Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, found that man had, in addition, altruistic feelings, and that benevolence had a priority of position in motivating man.

Both schools of thought, however, still conceived of the individual as separate from society and, consequently, both schools assumed an external source, an explicit or implicit social contract, for the origin of society.

For the altruistic school, adherence to this rigid individualism made it difficult to maintain the existence of superior altruistic impulses that could be logically reconciled with the reality of social life. The absolute nature of the individual's altruistic impulses could not be successfully defended in the face of the relativism suggested by the social facts. Even the shifting from the intellectual to the sentimental approach did not solve the difficulty for the altruistic school. Hutcheson, himself a predecessor of Smith in the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow and a teacher of Smith, differentiated between 'natural good'--what gives pleasure to our senses and, therefore, strictly individual in character--and 'moral good'--something that is derived from the love or approval of disinterested others and, therefore, desired not for strictly personal reasons but because of love and concern for mankind. But, by placing 'moral sense' on the same level as the natural senses, Hutcheson removed any justification for moral action that does not lead, ultimately, back to the self-interest of the individual.

Hume's contribution here lies in his concept of sympathy which regarded sympathy not as part of the 'content' of morality, ie. part of the question of the nature of right and wrong, but rather as an ability to participate in the feelings of others. Thus, Hume moved away from the view that whatever characterized the individual was already formed independently of his association with others and placed the objectivity of moral judgment on the fact of association with the feelings of others, i.e. based on considerations that arise beyond the individual. But Hume's position is unsatisfactory because he refers to 'general rules' which the individual uses to correct shortcomings in his ability to sympathize, when it is exactly the establishment of these 'general rules' that need to be explained through the concept of sympathy. Hume falls short because he does not bring the concept of social relations to bear sufficiently upon the development of moral judgment.

Thus, up to this point, both the egoistic and the altruistic schools of thought failed to see the individual moral conscience as arising out of a social conscience.

Another consideration is that at the time when Smith was writing, discussion on ethical issues among British moral philosophers centered around two distinct problems. On the one hand, there was the question of the nature of right and wrong, and, on the other, the question of the nature of the moral faculty by which we can distinguish between right and wrong. It is the

latter question with which Smith is concerned in his moral theory. He has little to say about the nature of morality and what he does say is not free of inconsistencies but his real contribution lies in supplying a theory of the origin of moral judgment which contains considerable elements of originality and realism.

There is another line of development that needs to be mentioned here. The concept of a rational order of nature found expression in the doctrines of the deistic thinkers of the period but was also reflected in the attempt to use the idea of natural law as a criterion for positive law.

Appeals were made to 'natural law' or to a 'natural order' by advocates of all types of political arrangements, whether they involved a justification of the existing political order or a demand for reforms. The Physiocrats, basing their views on the contention that there exists a harmony between the individual and society which is established through divine providence, advocated economic liberty and maintained that the furtherance of one's own interests would naturally further the welfare of the society as a whole. In their examination of social and economic facts the Physiocrats adopted a more empirical and positive approach than had hitherto been the case and it is this same approach that Smith adopted in his inquiries.

For our purposes it is essential to begin with the 'Theory of Moral Sentiments' because it is there that Smith discussed fully his idea of the virtuous man. In

the 'Wealth of Nations' he made no such attempt and his concept can only be found by implication in his economic theory.

A. THE VIRTUOUS MAN IN THE ETHICAL THEORY

In his ethical theory Smith attempted to provide a basis for an explanation and justification of human conduct in society. He tried to avoid a metaphysical basis and, at the same time, prevent the relativistic approach to which the emphasis on the pursuit of self-interest inevitably leads. In defining the virtuous man he attempted to reach such a balance.

Smith found in individual conduct in society the path that leads to the very essence of humanity. He saw the individual guided in his relations with other men by factors other than such an authority as a body of law. He noted that positive law was inadequate for explaining men's actions in society since men make appeals to a sense of justice that goes beyond it. "In no country do the decisions of positive law coincide exactly, in every case, with the rules which the natural sense of justice would dictate. Systems of positive law, therefore, ...can never be regarded as accurate systems of the rules of natural justice."²

If one suggests the existence of another dimension, that of natural justice, the standards of which positive

²Smith, A. The Theory of Moral Sentiments, Part VII, Section IV, revised edition 1790, reprinted by A. M. Kelley, N. Y., 1966, p. 502.

law is expected to meet, then one must account for the origin of such a dimension. If living according to the positive law is not, in itself, sufficient to describe one as a man of virtue then one must explain what virtue is. "First, wherein does virtue consist--or what is the tone of temper, the tenor of conduct, which constitutes the excellent and praiseworthy character, the character which is the natural object of esteem, honour and approbation? And, secondly, by what power or faculty in the mind is it that this character, whatever it be, is recommended to us? or, in other words, how and by what means does it come to pass, that the mind prefers one tenor or conduct to another; denominates the one right and the other wrong; considers the one as the object of approbation, honour and reward, and the other of blame, censure and punishment?"³

It is this uncertainty of the basis for the explanation and justification of human behaviour that is the main preoccupation of Smith in his ethical theory.

a) The concept of sympathy

Smith's aim is to show that moral values and feelings are the result of social experience and that it is these that provide the authoritative guide for the behaviour of the individual. He saw man as incapable of developing an individual human conscience in isolation. A man living

³Ibid., Part VII, Sect. I, pp. 391-392.

by himself, never having had any contact with other human beings like himself, could not develop any standards of conduct which characterize human beings. Such a man "could no more think of his own character, of the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, of the beauty or deformity of his own mind, than of the beauty or deformity of his own face." In society, however, he will find "in the countenance and behaviour of those he lives with" the "mirror which he wanted (lacked) before."⁴

In society the individual is forced to reflect upon his own feelings and desires. Whereas in isolation his thoughts were given totally to a consideration of the objects of his passions and desires, in society his thoughts begin to be occupied also with his own passions and desires themselves. He becomes conscious of the effects of his own feelings and actions on beings other than himself. And whereas in isolation "the consideration of his joy could in him excite no new joy, nor that of his sorrow any new sorrow...", in society "all his own passions will immediately become the causes of new passions" since now "he will observe that mankind approve of some of them, and are disgusted by others."⁵ Thus, his feelings and actions themselves will now become the

⁴Ibid., Part III, Ch. I, p. 162.

⁵Ibid., pp. 162-163.

object of his thought.

What becomes important in society is the ability to discern, assess and concern oneself with other people's feelings and actions. It is this ability that Smith, like Hume, understood by the concept of sympathy. For Hume sympathy is not, as Morrow points out, "another psychological trait existing in the individual alongside of the passion of self-love..." but, rather, "...the capacity of participating in the sentiments of others." It is in this sense that Smith uses sympathy and in this sense it does not constitute "the content of morality" but must be regarded as "the principle of communication between individuals which makes possible the moral judgment."⁶

Sympathy, then, is conceived of here as an ability to concern ourselves with others, although we sympathize most easily and most strongly with those who are closest to us, such as the members of our family, since we are likely to know better how things affect them.⁷

The unselfish character of sympathy is, to Smith, self-evident since by definition it implies not only consideration of other people as regards their attitude towards us but also consideration of other people in their joy and sorrow. How else could one explain

⁶Morrow, Glen R., The Ethical and Economic Theories of Adam Smith, op. cit., p. 29.

⁷Smith, 'Theory of Moral Sentiments', op. cit., Part VI, Sect. II, Ch. I, p. 321.

(barring religious explanations) the acts of benevolence that people perform anonymously without any consideration for or possibility of gain? It must be part of man's nature that he should feel with others since he may have nothing to gain from such an act. And so we are told that however selfish man may be considered to be, there are "some principles in his nature which interest him in the fortunes of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it." It is obvious also that "we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others" and that this sentiment of sorrow "is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it."⁸

Smith maintains that man's nature is such as to make him not only to want to appear praiseworthy but to actually want to be praiseworthy. What he would like other men to be he, naturally, wants to be that himself. He has a desire not only of "being approved of", but also a desire "of being what ought to be approved of." And while the first desire "could only have made him wish to appear to be fit for society" and "prompted him to the affectation of virtue and to the concealment of vice", the second "was necessary in order to render

⁸Ibid., Part I, Sect. I, Ch. I, p. 3.

him anxious to be really fit" and "to inspire him with the real love of virtue, and with the real abhorrence of vice."⁹

Thus the weaker, superficial individual will take pleasure from praise, be it deserved or not, while the "well-informed", "wise" person will derive pleasure from "doing what he knows to be praiseworthy, though he knows equally well that no praise is ever to be bestowed upon it."¹⁰

All this is not to imply that Smith did not consider self-interest as an essential part of human nature. A well-known quotation from his 'Wealth of Nations' is often used to support the view that Smith considers self-interest as the one governing principle in the relations among men. "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. Nobody but a beggar chuses (sic) to depend chiefly upon the benevolence of his fellow-citizens."¹¹ But this refers to the butcher as a butcher,

⁹Ibid., Part III, Ch. II, p. 170.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 170-171.

¹¹Smith, A., An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, Edited by E. Cannan, Modern Library, Random House, N. Y., 1937, Book I, Ch. II, p. 14.

the brewer as a brewer and the baker as a baker. There is nothing here to suggest that this basic principle should govern all human relations at all levels. One has to look in the rather neglected 'Theory of Moral Sentiments' to find evidence of the fact that Smith did not regard self-interest as the only principle governing human conduct.

What Smith objected to was the adoption of either of two extreme positions: On the one hand the over-emphasis placed on the role of self-interest in human conduct and, on the other, the attribution to benevolence the only basis for judgement of human action.

"Benevolence may, perhaps, be the sole principle of action in the Deity...but whatever may be the case with the Deity, so imperfect a creature as man, the support of whose existence requires so many things external of him, must often act from many other motives."¹²

The one, however, who denies man any ability for self-denial, as Mandeville does, goes to such an extreme that anything that "falls short of the most ascetic abstinence, he treats it as gross luxury and sensuality. Everything according to him is luxury which exceeds what is absolutely necessary for the support of human nature, so that there is vice even in the use of a clean shirt, or of a convenient habitation." And it is this same approach,

¹²Smith, 'Theory', op. cit., Part VII, Sect. II, pp. 446-447.

of representing "every passion as wholly vicious which is so in any degree or in any direction", which "treats every thing as vanity which has any reference either to what are, or ought to be, the sentiments of others."¹³

Man then, by his very nature, has to take actions which are motivated strictly by self-interest but this does not preclude benevolent acts which have no apparent egotistical basis.

b) Moral judgment and the individual conscience

Moral judgment is approval or disapproval. To approve or disapprove of someone's views means to adopt them or reject them and 'vice versa' and this applies equally in the case of the approval or disapproval of the feelings or passions of others. So that "the man who resents the injuries that have been done to me, and observes that I resent them precisely as he does, necessarily approves of my resentment" and "the man whose sympathy keeps time to my grief, cannot but admit the reasonableness of my sorrow."¹⁴

This is a straightforward, simple case of approval or disapproval. There are, however, cases where to find merit or demerit is more involved because we have to consider the motives of the giver as well as the feelings of the receiver. In order to approve of, say, the

¹³ Ibid., pp. 456-458.

¹⁴ Ibid., Part I, Sect. I, Ch. III, p. 14.

gratitude of the receiver we must know the motives of the giver and so, as a result, "the sense of merit seems to be a compounded sentiment, and to be made up of two distinct emotions; a direct sympathy with the sentiments of the agent and an indirect sympathy with the gratitude of those who receive the benefit of his actions."¹⁵

Similarly, the sense of demerit would arise out of a direct antipathy with the motives of the giver and an indirect sympathy with the feelings of the receiver. In such cases we may approve of a feeling of resentment where we would otherwise, if the motives of the giver were different, approve of a feeling of gratitude.

There is another, more important, type of moral judgment and one that unavoidably concerns every individual, that is the approval or disapproval of one's own actions. What is involved here, in other words, is the conscience of the individual, what Smith sometimes calls the "impartial spectator" and sometimes the "man within". Since not all individuals possess the power of sympathy to the same degree any actions by any person are open to inadequate interpretation and are liable to misunderstanding. How is one to act in such cases? This is the function of the impartial spectator.

The appeal to the impartial spectator is an appeal to an imaginary spectator in full possession of all the

¹⁵Ibid., Part II, Sect. I, Ch. V, pp. 106-107.

circumstances and intentions of our actions. And although he may be a purely subjective one, in the sense that the appeal is internal, he is, nevertheless, one whose standards are fashioned by the standards of society. It may amount to being one's own judge but that judge, according to Smith, is likely to be much more exacting and demanding than the public "without" because he judges on the basis of our desire to be worthy and not just to appear worthy: "The jurisdiction of the man without is founded altogether in the desire of actual praise, and in the aversion to actual blame. The jurisdiction of the man within is founded altogether in the desire of praiseworthiness, and in the aversion to blameworthiness; in the desire of possessing those qualities, and performing those actions, which we love and admire in other people."¹⁶

Man, however, has a further possibility for appeal when he finds that his conscience is confused by the judgments of ignorant and weak men. He can appeal "to a still higher tribunal, to that of the all-seeing Judge of the world, whose eyes can never be deceived, and whose judgements can never be perverted."¹⁷

For Smith, moral judgment by an individual is basically the expression of social consciousness in that individual. The individual may feel very strongly

¹⁶Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 224-226.

the need to satisfy his own strictly personal self-interest, but that need cannot find expression and satisfaction in society without meeting with and taking into account the self-interest of others. According to Smith, if human self-awareness and conscience exist at all they do so because of their social foundation. Otherwise man would have no reason to be introspective about his feelings at all.

Actions which we imagine will meet with the approval of others will be the sort of actions which will tend to prevail and will help formulate the rules of conduct in society.

"It is thus that the general rules of morality are formed" and "when these general rules, indeed, have been formed, when they are universally acknowledged and established, by the concurring sentiments of mankind, we frequently appeal to them as the standards of judgment..." and it is then that these general rules are "commonly cited as the ultimate foundations of what is just and unjust in human conduct."¹⁸

At this point Smith attacks those who start from an a priori stand and then examine what they find in society on the basis of that position. He criticizes those who "draw up their system...as if right and wrong were formed like the decisions of a court of judicatory, by considering first

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 224 - 226.

the general rule, and then, secondly, whether the particular action under consideration fell properly within its comprehension."¹⁹

This ability of the individual to sympathize with another, Smith regards as a basically instinctive characteristic in its origin. This, he says, is demonstrated by our reaction of pulling back, for instance, our own leg or arm when we see someone else's leg or arm ready to be struck by an object.²⁰ This instinctive kind of identification becomes a conscious feeling of identification through contact with others and the development of sympathy.

Smith rejects reason as the original basis for understanding what is right and wrong. He agrees that judgements of right and wrong are regulated by reason and that "virtue may very properly be said to consist in a conformity to reason" but "it is altogether absurd and unintelligible to suppose that the first perception of right and wrong can be derived from reason." Reason may provide guidance as to what is the best way of achieving a certain objective or reaching a certain goal and thus it could be said that this or that is suitable or unsuitable for achieving something else. "But", says Smith, "reason cannot render any particular object either agreeable or disagreeable to the mind for its own sake" and "nothing can be agreeable

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 226.

²⁰ Ibid., Part I, Sect. I, Ch. I, p. 4.

or disagreeable for its own sake, which is not rendered such by immediate sense and feeling."²¹

It is not reason, then, but sympathy, the ability to go beyond the limits of our own individuality and participate in the feelings of others, that makes it possible to reach moral judgments. Sympathy permits the establishment of moral values and general rules of behaviour and, at the same time, provides the only avenue through which moral judgment could be truly made.

To Smith this is how we become moral. He is not concerned with why. He postulates that man has the ability, given to him by the "Author of Nature", to perform not only acts of egoism but also acts of altruism with the latter not motivated by his self-interest. Mortal man, even the most perfect that could be imagined, has to perform acts of self-interest if he is to survive but he also has the ability to perform acts of benevolence, an ability which is strictly human and which he can only develop in society. Since we cannot avoid pursuing our self-interest what matters is really how we pursue this self-interest not whether we do or not. Therein lies the essence of morality for Smith.

c) The virtuous man

"The perfectly virtuous man", according to Adam Smith, is that man "who acts according to the rules of perfect

²¹Ibid., Part VII, Sect. III, Ch. II, pp. 470-471.

prudence, of strict justice and of proper benevolence."²²

(i) Prudence. Prudence is primarily the concern with the basic needs of life, those needs that are derived from the instinct of self-preservation and the desire for material comforts and security. Attached to the concern for such material things, however, is the concern for one's reputation and social rank since "we cannot live long in the world without perceiving that the respect of our equals, our credit and rank in the society we live in, depend very much upon the degree in which we possess, or are supposed to possess, those advantages."²³

For Smith, then, the "proper business" of prudence is the "care of the health, of the fortune, or the rank and reputation of the individual, the objects upon which his comfort and happiness in this life are supposed principally to depend."²⁴

Smith deals extensively with the qualities of the prudent man. Such a man "is not ostentatious even of the abilities which he really possesses" and "although always sincere, he is not always frank and open". Cautious and reserved, frugal and parsimonious, the prudent man "is not guided by the giddy admiration of shining accomplishments but by the sober esteem of modesty, discretion and good conduct" and "he respects, with an almost religious

²²Ibid., Pt. VI, Sect. III, p. 349.

²³Ibid., Pt. VI, Sect. III, p. 349.

²⁴Ibid., Pt. VI, Sect. I, p. 311.

scrupulosity, all the established decorum and ceremonies of society." He is the type of man who endeavours to improve his situation but is not seeking spectacular accomplishments and is satisfied with modest, gradual and continual improvement.²⁵

In the 'Wealth of Nations' Smith sometimes refers to man as being insolent and unscrupulous²⁶ but nowhere does he suggest that he regards these as qualities of the virtuous man.

The prudent man then is a steady worker, frugal, modest, parsimonious, no revolutionary, generally contented but also seeking to improve himself, however slowly. This, however, is only the picture of the prudent man and for the fully virtuous man one must turn to justice and benevolence.

(ii) Justice. Justice, we are told, is one of the objects of law which is the concern of jurisprudence (literally, prudence or foresight in law). Jurisprudence being that science which inquires into the general principles which ought to be the foundation of the laws of all nations, justice is "the foundation of civil government" and has as its object "the security from injury".²⁷

In order of importance "the most sacred laws of justice...are the laws which guard the life and person of our neighbour; the next are those which guard what are

²⁵Ibid., pp. 312-315.

²⁶Smith, 'Wealth', op. cit., p. 751.

²⁷Smith, Lectures on Justice, edited by Edwin Cannan, Kelley & Millman, New York, 1956, pp. 1-3.

called his personal rights, or what is due to him from the promises of others."²⁸

This gradation in importance of the various laws reflects the priorities which the just individual in society should adopt. Although an individual naturally concerns himself more with what affects him rather than with what affects someone else, there are limits to how far he can go to protect his own interests in opposition to those of others. A man, "in the race for wealth and honours and preferements,...may run as hard as he can and strain every muscle and every nerve, in order to outstrip all his competitors. But if he should jostle, or throw down any of them, the indulgence of the spectators is entirely at an end. It is violation of fair play, which they cannot admit of."²⁹ Society will sympathize with the victim and will inflict upon the violator of the laws of justice the appropriate penalties. Because "when the preservation of an individual is inconsistent with the safety of a multitude, nothing can be more just than that the many should be preferred to the one."³⁰

True virtue, then, implied not only the qualities of prudence but also adherence to the rules of justice which is, in essence, the obligation to consider the interest and well-being of others in one's effort to improve oneself.

²⁸Smith, 'Theory of Moral Sentiments', op. cit., Pt. II, Sect. II, p. 121.

²⁹Ibid., p. 121.

³⁰Ibid., p. 131.

(iii) Benevolence. The freedom to engage in benevolent acts is an essential quality of beneficence. Acts of magnanimity, generosity, altruism, charity, kindness are all dependent upon the wish of the individual for their expression; to force someone to engage in them would only result in the removal of their justification to which the particular circumstances may have given rise. Because to oblige a man "by force to perform what in gratitude he ought to perform...would, if possible, be still more improper than his neglecting to perform it."³¹ And so, while force may be justifiably used to ensure the observance of the rules of justice, the observance of the precepts of beneficence cannot be ensured by the same method. While injustice may deserve punishment, lack of benevolence does not, and while great acts of benevolence may deserve "the highest reward", the mere observance of the rules of justice deserves nothing more than simple approbation. After all, "we may often fulfill all the rules of justice by sitting still and doing nothing."³²

There is a further distinction between justice and benevolence and that is that justice is subject to more precise expression than benevolence. In the words of Smith, "the rules of justice may be compared to the rules of grammar; the rules of the other virtues, to the rules which critics lay down for the attainment of what is sublime and elegant in composition. The one are precise,

³¹Ibid., p. 113.

³²Ibid., p. 117.

accurate and indispensable. The other are loose, vague and indeterminate and present us rather with a general idea of the perfection we ought to aim at, than afford us any certain and infallible directions for acquiring it." ³³

Smith also expresses the view that despite limitations of national boundaries it is not possible for any man not to feel aversion at the thought of suffering by any member of the human race. He concludes, however, that man, with his limited capacity and in his humble position on earth, is only capable of looking after the interests of himself, his family, his friends and his country. ³⁴

The truly virtuous man, then, is not one who simply does what is demanded of him in the name of prudence and justice but also one who engages in acts which can only involve self-sacrifice on his part. Whether an action would be described as benevolent or just would depend on his motive, and that only the "impartial spectator" is likely to know on every occasion.

d) The ideal society

The prevalence of justice is the minimum prerequisite to the survival of any society. It is, indeed, "the main pillar that upholds the whole edifice." Even a society in which the social binds are strictly utilitarian, "as among different merchants", one which exists "from a sense

³³Ibid., Pt. III, Ch. VI, p. 250.

³⁴Ibid., Pt. VI, Sect. II, Ch. III, pp. 345-348.

of its utility, without love or affection", one in which men have no sense of obligation or feel no gratitude towards one another, even such a mercenary society cannot exist if men are ready to injure one another. The avoidance of injurious practices can be ensured only through the establishment of a system of justice.³⁵

Such a society as the one just described may be one inhabited by Smith's perfectly prudent men and for prudence to prevail justice must be observed. But the kind of justice that is required in such a society is the kind that can be legislated; the sort of legislation that discourages the inflicting of bodily harm and protects property and personal rights. The perfectly prudent man, therefore, must observe the rules of justice if he is to be prudent at all. That is all he needs to observe.

Such a society, however, is not an ideal society, one which Smith would describe as flourishing and happy. Only whenever men are aware of their need for the assistance of others and where this "necessary assistance is reciprocally afforded from love, from gratitude, from friendship and esteem", only then society "flourishes and is happy". The members of such a happy and flourishing society "are bound together by the agreeable bonds of love and affection and are, as it were, drawn to one common centre of mutual good offices."³⁶

³⁵Ibid., p. 124.

³⁶Ibid., p. 124.

For such a society prudence and legislated justice are not enough; there must be mutual love and beneficence, and beneficence, like love, cannot be legislated. "The law hinders the doing of injuries to others, but there can be no fixed laws for acts of benevolence."³⁷ Furthermore, nature "has not thought it necessary to guard and enforce the practice of it (i.e. of benevolence) by the terrors of merited punishment in case it should be neglected." In this sense beneficence is the "ornament which embellishes, not the foundation which supports" society and therefore, beneficence "is less essential to the existence of society than justice."³⁸

It must be pointed out here that by "less essential" Smith does not mean less desirable. He simply means that justice, i.e. that part of human relations which can be regulated by legislation, is the minimum requirement. A society may exist on the basis of such justice alone but it is likely to be a poor specimen. In an ideal society relations among men would be governed not by justice alone but by voluntary acts of benevolence. And while he calls beneficence an "ornament" Smith must regard it as an essential feature of this ideal society if his virtuous man were to be fully virtuous according to his definition.

At the same time, however, this means that a society of men cannot be founded on benevolence alone. Society

³⁷Smith, 'Lectures', op. cit., p. 91.

³⁸Smith, 'Theory', op. cit., p. 125.

fulfills first of all the basic function of helping to satisfy economic needs. And so to the 'Wealth of Nations'.³⁹

B. THE VIRTUOUS MAN IN THE ECONOMIC THEORY

As was stated earlier, the concept of the virtuous man which Smith revealed in his ethical theory can only be found implicitly in the economic theory. It is in the economic relations among men, in the relation of men to the economic laws and the economic system that the elements of virtue must be found. For our purposes, the economic laws or the economic system should be regarded as suitable for society only in so far as they promote those human characteristics that are typical of Smith's virtuous man.

a) The prudent man: From the 'Moral Sentiments' to the 'Wealth of Nations'.

Smith's man of virtue reaches the ultimate by acting with perfect prudence guided by the rules of "strict" justice and a sense of "proper" benevolence. His man of prudence, however, stops short of that ideal by not engaging in acts of benevolence but by acting only on the basis of self-interest within the dictates of justice. Whichever the motivating force for an action might be, however, sympathy is the substance that holds society together; it is sympathy that will indicate the appropriateness of an action, the appropriate degree of self-estimation, the point

³⁹ See Chapter on the origins of the division of labour in Smith's 'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. II.

at which "vanity" may acquire a social function.

Men, having come together in society because of personal physical needs, maintain their interest in themselves and try to improve their position in society not merely for the satisfaction of personal physical needs and the acquisition of material wealth but also for reasons of personal reputation for its own sake. "It is chiefly from this regard to the sentiments of mankind, that we pursue riches and avoid poverty. For to what purpose is all the toil and bustle in the world? What is the end of avarice and ambition, of the pursuit of wealth, of power, and pre-eminence? Is it to supply the necessities of nature? The wages of the meanest labourer can supply them."⁴⁰

With the development of society on the basis of sympathy, vanity, as Macfie points out,⁴¹ acquires a social function in Smith's system. Vanity as such is not a worthy or enviable attribute but when it springs from a desire to attract the true admiration and sincere respect of others then it acquires qualities of social worth. "The desire of the esteem and admiration of other people, when for qualities and talents which are the natural and proper objects of esteem and admiration, is the real love of true glory--a passion which, if not the very best passion of human nature is certainly one of the

⁴⁰Smith, 'Theory', op. cit., Part I, Sect. III, Ch. II, p. 70.

⁴¹Macfie, A. L., The Individual in Society, Allen & Unwin, London, 1967, p. 73.

best. Vanity is very frequently no more than an attempt prematurely to usurp that glory before it is due."⁴²

The point is to achieve that degree of self-estimation which coincides with reality, neither over-estimating nor under-estimating one's worth.

To aspire, therefore, to high office or to a high social position or to great wealth, things which are truly admired when rightfully acquired, is one example of the sort of connecting link between what is personally desired and what is socially desirable. It is the effort involved in attempting to reach a high position in society rather than the actual attainment which makes for progress in society. Smith makes this perfectly plain when he associates different behavioural characteristics with different social classes. He finds that it is the middle and lower classes that possess the incentive to improve their position in society, material or otherwise, and that, consequently it is they who develop qualities which contribute towards progress in society.

"The man of rank and distinction...is unwilling to embarrass himself with what can be attended either with difficulty or distress. To figure at a ball is his great triumph, and to succeed in an intrigue of gallantry, his highest exploit...He may be willing to expose himself to some little danger, and to make a campaign when it happens to be the fashion, but he shudders with horror at the

⁴²Smith, 'Theory', op. cit., Part VI, Sect. III, p. 379.

thought of any situation which demands the continual and long exertion of patience, industry, fortitude and application of thought. These virtues are hardly ever to be met with in men who are born to those high stations."

That is why "in all governments...the highest offices are generally possessed, and the whole detail of administration conducted, by men who were educated in the middle and inferior ranks of life, who have been carried forward by their own industry and abilities..."⁴³

While, however, vanity and self-interest have social functions their possession is by no means exclusive to the prudent man and it is only in the hands of such a man that these two characteristics become worthy. In this respect the man of virtue possesses two qualities which are of the essence: "Superior reason", which enables him to assess the long-term effects of his actions, and "self-command", by which he is enabled to "abstain from present pleasure or to ensure present pain, in order to obtain a greater pleasure or avoid a greater pain in some future time."⁴⁴

Thus the prudent man, motivated by self-interest and the desire to win the true admiration and esteem of others, guided by his rational powers and ability for self-restraint and observing the path set by the rules of justice, becomes the mainstay of progress in society. By pursuing

⁴³Ibid., Part I, Sect. III, Ch. II, p. 78.

⁴⁴Ibid., Pt. IV, Ch. II, pp. 271-272.

his personal progress in a way he only can he is in a position to ensure the progress of the society at large.

The prudent man reaches the heights of true virtue by engaging in acts of benevolence but it is not through benevolence alone that he can improve himself since benevolence by itself is not the basis of human society. "Man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only."⁴⁵

The prudent man, then, is the man whose economic side is reflected in the 'Wealth of Nations', the man concerned with earning his living. As such, however, he comes under a different type of treatment, a more empirical treatment and one which is not concerned with any motivations of benevolence on his part.

b) The prudent man: The reward for his labour.

Smith rejected the mercantilistic idea that foreign trade was the producer of wealth and moved away from the Physiocrats' contention that responsible for such production was the agricultural worker. By making labour in general the producer of wealth Smith shifted the focus of economic inquiry from a technical to a social level.⁴⁶

Smith never developed a satisfactory labour theory of value and became involved with difficulties of 'value

⁴⁵Smith, 'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. II, p. 14.

⁴⁶Roll, E., A History of Economic Thought, Faber, London 1950, p. 156.

in use' and 'value in exchange' but for our purposes it is sufficient to point out that he emphasized labour in his efforts to reach a satisfactory theory of value.

He did not look at the three categories of wages, profits and rent as 'functional', as constituting rewards for functions performed without implications of social status; instead, having observed and accepted the social divisions he developed his economic analysis around such divisions.⁴⁷ Here a word of clarification is necessary as to Smith's use of the word 'profit'. Bearing in mind that he wrote in the context of the eighteenth century, before the full rise of the factory system and when 'cottage' industries were still in existence, his use of the term 'profit' refers to the earnings of the owner of stock. He differentiated it from the earnings of the "labour of inspection and direction", i.e. management, and indentified it with the actual ownership of capital, with "the owner of this capital...discharged of all labour."⁴⁸

In his analysis Smith maintained a labour orientation in assessing social worth. Expressing support for the improvement in the material conditions of the lower classes as being not only equitable but also as tending to stimulate the economy, he says: "Servants, labourers and

⁴⁷ Barber, W. J., A History of Economic Thought, Penguin, London 1967, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁸ 'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., pp. 48-49.

workmen of different kinds, make up the far greater part of every great political society. But what improves the circumstances of the greater part can never be regarded as an inconveniency to the whole. No society can surely be flourishing and happy of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, cloath and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, cloathed and lodged....

The liberal reward of labour...increases the industry of the common people. The wages of labour are the encouragement of industry, which like every other human quality improves in proportion to the encouragement it receives."⁴⁹ Furthermore, "in every profession, the exertion of the greater part of those who exercise it, is always in proportion to the necessity they are under of making that exertion. This necessity is the greatest with those to whom the emoluments of their profession are the only source from which they expect their fortune, or even their ordinary revenue and subsistence."⁵⁰

Thus the reward for labour is of the greatest intrinsic economic value and social worth, since labour is the basic ingredient in Smith's theory of value. It is the reward for the exercise of hard work and professional diligence by the individual that is of intrinsic value not the reward for the use of capital.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 78-81.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 717.

Capital is indeed increased through the exercise of such good qualities as frugality and parsimony,⁵¹ but high profits are not the fitting reward for such practices. This must be so since, according to Smith, high profits tend to have a corrupting effect on the character of the very people who are in a position to provide an example of worthy social living. "The high rate of profit seems every where to destroy that parsimony which in other circumstances is natural to the character of the merchant. When profits are high, that sober virtue seems to be superfluous, and expensive luxury to suit better the affluence of his situation. But the owners of the great mercantile capitals are necessarily the leaders and conductors of the whole industry in every nation, and their example has a much greater influence upon the manners of the whole industrious part of it than that of any other order of men. If his employer is attentive and parsimonious, the workman is very likely to be so too; but if the master is dissolute and disorderly, the servant who shapes his work according to the pattern which his master prescribes to him, will shape his life too according to the example which he sets him. Accumulation is thus prevented in the hands of all those who are naturally the most disposed to accumulate; and the funds destined for the maintenance of productive labour receive no augmentation from the revenue of those who ought naturally to augment them the most."⁵²

⁵¹Ibid., Bk. II, Ch. III, pp. 328-329.

⁵²Ibid., Bk. IV, Ch. VII, Pt. III, p. 578.

Nor do the receivers of rent escape Smith's scathing remarks, being described as men who "love to reap where they never sowed" (the point here being that while other men would like to do the same the landlords succeed in doing so)⁵³ and who demand and receive rent for unimproved land, for improvements made with the tenant's own capital and for such produce of the land as is altogether beyond improvement by man.⁵⁴

Thus, for Smith, the earnings that are likely to bring forth and stimulate the better qualities in the character of the prudent man, those of honesty, diligence and hard work, are precisely the earnings which are the natural rewards for the application of those very same qualities. And the higher such earnings are the more the good qualities are stimulated; in contrast, higher profits are likely to stimulate behaviour of an unsocial nature.

Smith quite explicitly identifies the self-interest of the worker, and that of the landowner, with the interest of society on strictly economic grounds. The compatibility of the self-interest of the worker with the interests of society at large is shown by the fact that an increase in the capital available, a necessary factor for economic growth, tends to lead to a rise in employment and higher wages; on the other hand, while rents also tend to rise during periods of economic growth, profits under conditions

⁵³Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. VI, p. 49.

⁵⁴Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. XI, pp. 144-145.

of competition tend to decline with the growth in the availability of capital.

It is, therefore, in the self-interest of the profit-earner, concludes Smith, to advocate legislation that would tend to control the rate of competitive economic growth and would give him higher profits. "The proposal of any new law or regulation of commerce which comes from this order, ought always to be listened to with great precaution, and ought never to be adopted till after having been long and carefully examined, not only with the most scrupulous, but with the most suspicious attention. It comes from an order of men, whose interest is never exactly the same with that of the public, who have generally an interest to deceive and even to oppress the public, and who accordingly have, upon many occasions, both deceived and oppressed it."⁵⁵

Such men, however, do not fit Smith's concept of the prudent man since by definition the prudent man would not allow his self-interest to come into open conflict with the interest of the society as a whole. Instead, the prudent man is the sort of man "who lives within his income" and "is naturally contented with his situation, which, by continual, though small accumulations, is growing better and better every day."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid., Bk. I, Ch. XI, pp. 249-250.

⁵⁶ 'Theory of Moral Sentiments', op. cit., Pt. VI, Sect. I, p. 314.

c) The functions of government

Smith's general attitude as to the function of government is to minimize its significance as a source of positive action but not to eliminate it altogether. For Smith it is in individuals, acting as individuals, and not in the human institutions that the capacity for the utmost good or evil is to be found: "What institution of government could tend so much to promote the happiness of mankind as the general prevalence of wisdom and virtue? All government is but an imperfect remedy for the deficiency of these. ...On the contrary, what civil policy can be so ruinous and destructive as the vices of men? The fatal effects of bad government arise from nothing, but that it does not sufficiently guard against the mischiefs which human wickedness gives occasion to." ⁵⁷

Yet Smith must have regarded government and some of its activities, at least, as a "natural" development in a society where "natural" liberty prevailed since he assigned to it specific functions; indeed, he said at one point that "the establishment of law and government is the highest effort of human prudence and wisdom." ⁵⁸

In the 'Wealth of Nations' Smith lists three general duties of government: "First, the duty of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; Secondly, the duty of protecting, as far as

⁵⁷ Ibid., Pt. IV, Ch. II, p. 269.

⁵⁸ 'Lectures of Justice', op. cit., p. 160.

possible, every other member of the society from the injustice or oppression of every member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice; and thirdly, the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals, to erect and maintain; because the profit could never repay the expense to any individual or small number of individuals, though it may frequently do much more than repay it to a great society."⁵⁹ Such works, of importance to the society as a whole, are "chiefly those for facilitating the commerce of the society, and those for promoting the instruction of the people."⁶⁰

Smith, then, did assign to government some functions of social significance. For him education is a field in which the government is expected to give support for the benefit of the society as a whole. And this is only one example of his genuine concern for social well-being. Jacob Viner points out that Smith expressed some support for the use of taxation as "an instrument of social reform," by suggesting forms of taxation the incidence of which would fall heavier on the rich and by expressing support for the principle of progressive taxation.⁶¹

⁵⁹'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. IV, Ch. IX, P. 651.

⁶⁰Ibid., Bk. V, Ch. I, Pt. III, p. 681.

⁶¹Viner, J. J., 'Adam Smith and Laissez-Faire', Adam Smith, 1776-1926, J. M. Clark et. al., A. M. Kelley, N. Y. 1966, pp. 152-153.

C. CONCLUSION

In the ethical theory the concept of the prudent man is described extensively. His characteristics add up to a definition of the term according to Adam Smith. The prudent man is described as being diligent, steady in his work and habits, frugal and parsimonious; he leads a quiet and decent life and is satisfied with small but regular additions to his income within which he always attempts to live. These are not qualities typical of the over-ambitious the venturesome, the seeker after high profits or the builder of the vastest financial empire in the shortest possible time.

The qualities of the prudent man, according to Smith, imply regularity and order, a balance and a moderation in the life of the ideal man. Adding to this the observance of the "rules of justice" and the performance of acts of "proper" benevolence in the relations with other men, Smith creates a picture of the ideal man in the ideal society.

In such a society little is forced on the individual and much depends on the individual's consideration of others, a consideration which springs both from an element of self-love and an element of love for others. In other words, the happy society will be the one in which acts can be seen to be based not only on the minimum requirements of justice but also on the more demanding and strictly personal feelings of benevolence.

In the economic theory, Smith sees economic growth as being tied primarily to the exercise of labour and as developing through a regular accumulation of competitive capital which is used to further the employment of productive labour. This he sees as taking place in a state of 'natural' liberty. In a society where economic action is not forced along paths which, to Smith, appeared 'unnatural' through trading privileges and monopolies, the self-interest of the individual is made to appear as being identical with that of the society at large. It is not, however, the self-interest of everyone but that of the wage- and rent-earners that is made identical with the interest of the society.

Smith asserts that high wages tend to encourage diligence, hard work, frugality--all qualities of the prudent man. Further, he finds that the growth of capital is achieved only through such frugality and parsimony and not through high profits. This he explains both on moral and on economic grounds. On the one hand, he maintains that "high" profits tend to corrupt the individual instead of inspiring the sort of behaviour that is typical of the prudent man. On the other hand, he argues that the increase in the availability of competitive capital, which makes for economic growth and which is in the interest of the other sections of the society, is contrary to the self-interest of the profit-earner since such an increase will tend to lead to a decline in the rate of profits.

There is an inconsistency, of course, in the case of the absentee landowner who receives rent and who benefits

in the same was as the wage-earner from economic expansion. Although Smith criticized such landowners for their indolence and their exploitation of their tenants on moral grounds the inconsistency on economic grounds remains. In spite of this inconsistency, however, the concept of the virtuous man as basically a prudent man is clearly at the basis of Smith's philosophic thought, in both its moral and economic aspects.

The one over-riding characteristic of such an ideal man is the extent to which he is made personally responsible for his actions. On moral grounds, this is based on a deistic foundation which is derived from Smith's contention that the "Author of Nature" made man "the immediate judge of mankind" and, consequently, of himself. On economic grounds, it is based on the theory that real progress in society as a whole can be achieved principally through the progress of the individual, through his effort at self-improvement.

Consequently, whatever the institutional arrangements might be they must not be of such a nature that would undermine the desire of the individual for self-improvement or his sense of personal responsibility.

Undesirable institutional arrangements may be reflected in the detrimental effects of living in cities and working in factories, or in the privileges and monopolies granted for the sake of high profits, or in the obstruction of the individual in his efforts to acquire more knowledge and learning.

It is with the last aspect that this thesis is particularly concerned and it is especially with this view of the individual in mind, as one who is imbued with a sense of personal responsibility and a desire for self-improvement, that we must examine Smith's views on education.

CHAPTER IV

ADAM SMITH'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

Educational thought in England until the end of the nineteenth century was concerned more with practical issues of school organization, curriculum, teaching methods and the question of the role of the State in education than with matters of educational theory and philosophy.¹ This failure of the educational theorist to relate a certain philosophical outlook more directly and explicitly with the discussion of educational matters could, perhaps, account for the failure of some writers, who did express concern with matters of education, to systematize their thoughts into a concrete and explicit educational theory.

The lack of such a systematization is evident in Smith's work. Although he concentrated the bulk of such views in Articles II and III of Book V of the 'Wealth of Nations' his presentation was affected by his main motive of demonstrating the inefficiency of public education in his day as an example of how the expansion of public control could hamper progress in society.

In the process of his presentation he expressed views pertaining to a variety of educational matters which, if one added to the various remarks on education that he made explicitly or implicitly in the rest of his work, should

¹Curtis, S. J., & Boulton, M.E.A., A Short History of Educational Ideas, University Tutorial Press, London 1963, p. 391

reveal an educational theory which has some internal consistency as well as a relevance to the rest of his thought.

As already pointed out, no historian of education appears to have done this adequately. Most make little more than a passing reference to his support of public education without examining the conditions he attached and thus presenting it merely as an exception to his general 'laissez-faire' approach. In his monograph, referred to above, C. F. Arrowood is primarily concerned with waging an attack on Smith's 'laissez-faire' philosophy and with demonstrating that public education since Smith's days has been successful.

It is, therefore, the main purpose of this chapter first to present Smith's arguments on education, implicit and explicit, in some organized form and, secondly, to attempt to link Smith's recommendations so that his basic educational theory will emerge as a consistent whole. In this process it is hoped to show that practically all of his recommendations were based on actual practice, in one way or another, in Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century.

A. SMITH'S ARGUMENTS ON EDUCATION

a) The financing and organization of education

Smith begins by asking whether public support of education, in his day, had made any real and positive contribution towards the improvement of education.

Specifically: "Have those public endowments contributed in general to promote the end of their institution? Have they contributed to encourage the diligence and to improve the abilities of the teachers? Have they directed the course of education towards objects more useful, both to the individual and to the public, than those to which it would naturally have gone of its own accord?"²

The nature of the questions themselves betray both Smith's bias and his concern with real and practical issues. Public support of education, if it were to be justified at all, would have to result in qualitative and concrete improvements in education. To what extent could public support of education be justified if in any society, as Smith believed, "no system, no science would be taught for which there was not some demand; or which the circumstances of the times did not render it either necessary, or convenient, or at least fashionable, to learn."³

Smith did not see education as a citizen's right but rather as a service, like any other, the public support of which must be justified on the basis of the society's needs and then only if private arrangements were inadequate for the purpose. He illustrates his point by reference to ancient Greece where the social and political changes in Athens in the fifth century B. C. provided fertile ground for the flourishing of the arts of the Sophists on a strictly

²'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. V, Ch. I, Pt. III, Art. 2, p. 716.

³Ibid., p. 733.

private basis.⁴

Whatever the changing circumstances in society demanded in the way of changes in education, the society, as opposed to the State, itself provided. "Masters had been found, it seems, for instructing the better sort of people among those nations in every art and science in which the circumstances of their society rendered it necessary or convenient for them to be instructed. The demand for such instruction produced, what it always produces, the talent for giving it; and the emulation which an unrestrained competition never fails to excite, appears to have brought that talent to a very high degree of perfection."⁵

Thus private arrangements, growing out of the needs of the society, and rivalry among teachers should, generally speaking, be sufficient to provide whatever education is required in a society at a given time. Not only would such education be provided but it would be provided in the best and most efficient manner; witness, for instance, the effectiveness of the method of the "ancient philosophers" and the influence which they have had over their students who were under no compulsion to attend the lectures and who, with their fees, provided the entire revenue of the teacher. Thus the teacher, having to rely completely on his ideas and his teaching ability to earn his living in competition with other teachers, is likely to provide the best of what he has to offer. "Rivalry and emulation render

⁴Ibid., p. 731.

⁵Ibid., p. 732.

excellency, even in mean professions, an object of ambition, and frequently occasion the very greatest exertions."⁶

To such a private system of education Smith contrasts two types of educational institutions which seemed to have been well-established by his time. One is the institution which is self-governing and in which "the authority...resides in the body corporate, the college or university." The danger in such an institution is that the teachers, secure in their positions, "are likely to make a common cause, to be all very indulgent to one another, and every man to consent that his neighbour may neglect his duty provided he himself is allowed to neglect his own."⁷ As an example of this type of institution Smith, speaking from experience, names the University of Oxford.

The corruption of the teacher may also be encouraged by another type of organization, one in which "the authority... resides...in some other extraneous persons, in the bishop of the diocese for example, in the governor of the province, or, perhaps in some minister of state." The danger here lies not in the teacher neglecting to give any lectures but rather in the disinterest and, indeed, inability of the authorities to judge the quality of the lectures given, remaining satisfied as long as the lectures are given. Furthermore, the teacher, open as he is to any capricious judgments by the authority in question, would be apt to

⁶Ibid., p. 717.

⁷Ibid., p. 718.

sacrifice his academic integrity in order to protect his position. Smith appears to draw upon his own personal contacts in Toulouse and Paris when he gives the administration of a French University as an example of such an organization.⁸

Smith also expressed his preference for the private educational institutions and the private financing of education by referring to the private schools of his day. "Those parts of education, it is observed, for the teaching of which there are no public institutions, are generally the best taught."⁹ And further: "In England the public schools are much less corrupted than the universities... The reward of the schoolmaster in most cases depends principally, in some cases almost entirely, upon the fees or honoraries of his scholars. Schools have no exclusive privileges."¹⁰

Smith, then concluded that public organization and public financing of education had, in general, a corrupting influence on the teaching body.

In dealing with organization Smith raised another point. He saw a relation between the organization and size of the university and the speed with which the university would tend to adapt itself to changing conditions.

⁸Ibid., pp. 718-719.

⁹Ibid., p. 721.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 721.

He came to the conclusion that educational institutions in his day were rather slow either in promoting advancements in knowledge or in adapting themselves to changing conditions and to the growth of knowledge. This he found to be particularly the case with the richer universities which "have been the slowest in adapting these improvements, and the most averse to permit any considerable change in the established plan of education." On the other hand, "those improvements were more easily introduced into some of the poorer universities, in which the teachers, depending upon their reputation for the greater part of their subsistence, were obliged to pay more attention to the current opinions of the world."¹¹

In Smith's view attendance at school and university should be, theoretically at least, the best preparation for life. "No better method, it seems, could be hit upon of spending, with any advantage, the long interval between infancy and that period of life at which men begin to apply themselves in good earnest to the real business of the world, which is to occupy them during the remaining of their days." Yet, "the greater part of what is taught in schools and universities, ...does not seem to be the most proper preparation for that business."¹² Clearly, education in his day had failed to demonstrate its relevance to practical reality.

¹¹Ibid., p. 727.

¹²Ibid., p. 728.

The reason for such a state of affairs Smith attributes to the fact that education for the general public was in the hands of institutions which "were originally intended only for the education of a particular profession, that of churchmen." Having been established as theological seminaries these institutions widened their enrolment without giving due consideration either to the needs of their non-clerical students or to the changing needs of society.

Such was the gulf between university curricula and practical reality, Smith argued, that parents tended to send their children travelling to foreign countries "immediately upon their leaving school, and without sending them to any university." This practice Smith regarded as absurd and although a young man may learn a few languages during his travels, these he never learns to any degree of proficiency. He emphasized that "by travelling so very young" and by staying away from the "inspection and control of his parents and relations every useful habit" which a young man may have acquired during his early education "is almost necessarily either weakened or effaced" instead of "being riveted and confirmed."¹³

The cause of such an unwise practice Smith attributed to the "discredit" of the Universities of his day, a discredit which was due to the inability of the Universities to adapt themselves to the changing conditions. Furthermore,

¹³Ibid., p. 728.

since secondary education was geared to the requirements of university education the latter affected vitally the curriculum of the secondary schools.

The emphasis which Smith placed on the importance of 'practical' education also emerges in his comments on the education of women. Women were not allowed a university education in his day and there were "no public institutions for the education of women. As a result the education they received was of a much more 'practical' nature and there was "nothing useless, absurd, or fantastical in the common course of their education. ...Every part of their education tends evidently to some useful purpose; ...In every part of her life a woman feels some conveniency or advantage from every part of her education."¹⁴

Smith then reached the conclusion that public financing and control of education should, in general, be avoided for two basic reasons: First, by creating vested interests it tends to have a corrupting influence on the teachers. Secondly, it tends to hinder the adaptation of the curriculum to changing conditions in society with the result that educational institutions fail to fulfill their educative function.

b) Education for citizenship

After condemning the state of public education in his day Smith wonders whether the public authority should be at all concerned with education. "Ought the public,

¹⁴Ibid., p. 734.

therefore, to give no attention, it may be asked, to the education of the people? Or if it ought to give any, what are the different parts of education which it ought to attend to in the different orders of the people? and in what manner ought it to attend to them?"¹⁵ The correct answer for Smith would depend on the type of society in question.

In a primitive, tribal society, he says, the citizen has a far greater opportunity to exercise constantly his judgment. He has to fend for himself much more than a citizen in a society where there is a great deal of division of labour. Problems are simpler and the efficacy of the solutions can be judged much more readily. Indeed in such a society every citizen "is in some measure a statesman, and can form a tolerable judgment concerning the interest of the society, and the conduct of those who govern it. How far their chiefs are good judges in peace or good leaders in war, is obvious to the observation of almost every single man among them." And although the degree of knowledge among the citizens is not very great it is "generally sufficient for conducting the whole simple business of the society."¹⁶

Conditions in a "civilized and commercial society", however, are different. There the ordinary citizen, in contrast to the man "of some rank and fortune", is faced

¹⁵Ibid., p. 734.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 735.

on the one hand with the need to earn his living at a very early age and, on the other, with the harmful effects on the intellect of the dull and repetitious type of work which is the result of the division of labour in a materially advanced society. "The man whose whole life is spent performing a few simple operations, of which the effects too are, perhaps, always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur." Such a man becomes incapable of "conceiving any generous, noble or tender sentiment", incapable of judging the interests of his country or even of defending his country and, generally, acquires his vocational dexterity "at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues." It is here that Smith sees some necessary educational function for the government to perform. He continues: "In every improved and civilized society this is the state into which the laboring poor, that is, the great body of the people must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it."¹⁷

Smith clearly saw that in a non-authoritarian society the orderly and successful conduct of the affairs of state depends not merely on a well-trained officialdom but also on an educated citizenry. "In free countries, where the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 735.

safety of government depends very much upon the favourable judgment which the people may form of its conduct, it must surely be of the highest importance that they should not be disposed to judge rashly or capriciously concerning it."

He felt that only through education could people acquire those personal attitudes necessary for the successful operation of a free society: the intelligent examination of the rules of society, the willing submission to the rule of law. The more educated people are "the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders." Furthermore, "an instructed, intelligent people are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one. They feel themselves each individually more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to examine, and more capable of seeing through, the agitation of faction and sedition, and they are, upon that account, less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of government."¹⁸

It was obvious to Smith that given complete lack of appropriate legislation or other inducements commercial and industrial expansion could lead to the exploitation of the young. This he points out in a comparison between Scotland and England in his day. In Scotland, "where the division of labour is not far advanced, even the meanest

¹⁸Ibid., p. 740.

porter can read and write, because the price of education is cheap, and a parent can employ his child no other way at six or seven years of age. This, however, is not the case in the commercial parts of England. A boy of six or seven years of age at Birmingham can gain his threepence or sixpence a day, and parents find it to be their interest to set them to work; thus their education is neglected."¹⁹

Although Smith started with an attack on the state of public education in his day he did not conclude that public involvement in education was unnecessary. The problem, therefore, for him was not whether there should be any public involvement in education but what form such involvement should take. What appeared to him to be the appropriate nature of such an involvement was the role that the public authority could play in encouraging the continual advancement and expansion of knowledge and the intelligent consideration of public issues. It was in this direction that his recommendation for public involvement in education was pointing.

c) Moral Education

Moral education, for Smith, meant basically the development of the feeling of sympathy since, for him, moral and socially acceptable habits are acquired through emotional rather than rational experience.

In Smith's view the education that the child receives in the hands of his parents at a very young age determines

¹⁹ 'Lectures on Justice', op. cit., Part II, p. 256.

the degree of sympathy, and consequently the degree of awareness of others' needs, that the individual will possess. He stresses the importance of the family and the closeness of feeling that a member develops for relatives with whom he has become accustomed to sympathize; "He knows better how every thing is likely to affect them, and his sympathy with them is more precise and determinate than it can be with the greater part of other people. It approaches nearer, in short, to what he feels for himself."²⁰

It is an established rule, according to Smith, developed from nature, that the child should have the strongest affection for the closest of his relatives and reverence for his parents and also that the parent should feel stronger affection for his children than for his own parents. He, therefore, came to the conclusion that boarding-schools were harmful because they tended to hinder the natural development of family love, care and affection. He found evidence of this, he wrote, in the "higher ranks of life" in France and England. "Do you wish to educate your children to be dutiful to their parents, to be kind and affectionate to their brothers and sisters? Put them under the necessity of being dutiful children, of being kind affectionate brothers and sisters: educate them in your own home. From their parents' house they may, with propriety and advantage, go out every

²⁰'Theory of Moral Sentiments', op. cit., Part VI, Sect. II, Ch. I, p. 321.

day to attend public schools; but let their dwelling be always at home... Surely no acquirement which can possibly be derived from what is called a public education can make any sort of compensation for what is almost certainly and necessarily lost by it."

Smith also suggested that such an arrangement has beneficial effects not only on the behaviour of the children but also on that of the parents: "Respect for you must always impose a very useful restraint upon his conduct; and respect for them may frequently impose no useless restraint upon your own."²¹

Respect for and authority by the parents were, to Smith, essential aspects in the proper upbringing of children and he deplored the fact that children were often put to work too soon, before acquiring sufficient education, on the grounds that this allowed children to throw off the authority of the father.²²

The significance which Smith attached to the role that parents must play in the education of their children also reflects the fact that he regarded the family as the 'natural' unit in society: "Domestic education is the institution of nature--public education the contrivance of man. It is surely unnecessary to say which is likely to be the wisest."²³

²¹Ibid., pp. 325-326.

²²'Lectures on Justice', op. cit., pp. 256-257.

²³'Theory of Moral Sentiments', op. cit., p. 326.

These views are in line with his condemnation of travel at a young age, away from parental control and influence, as likely to weaken the good habits the youth might have acquired under the family's influence.

Since moral behaviour and social conduct were so inextricably related in Smith's theory, the teaching and encouragement of socially desirable "virtues", such as "self-command" and "vanity" or social ambition, would form part of moral education. On vanity, he gives the following advice to the father for the encouragement of the aspiring son. "The great secret of education is to direct vanity to proper objects. Never suffer him to value himself upon trivial accomplishments; but do not always discourage his pretension to those that are of real importance. He would not pretend to them if he did not earnestly desire to possess them. Encourage this desire; afford him every means to facilitate the acquisition; and do not take too much offence although he should sometimes assume the air of having attained it a little before the time."²⁴

Smith said little about the role the church and religion play in the moral education of the young. At one point in his 'Lectures on Justice' he refers to the education poor children receive through which "they learn to read, and this gives them the benefit of religion, which is a great advantage, not only considered in a pious

²⁴Ibid., Part VI, Sect. III, p. 380.

sense, but as it affords them subject for thought and speculation."²⁵ While the words "thought and speculation" may be of doubtful significance in this context, Smith seems to accept the premise that religious instruction has an important bearing on moral education. It is the family, however, the 'natural' unit, that provides the moral education, the 'natural' education.

Finally, it must be pointed out that Smith seems to have attached some significance to physical education, music and dancing for moral and social education. He refers to this in connection with the Greeks and the Romans. The physical education that the Greek citizen received, wrote Smith, "was intended to harden his body, to sharpen his courage, and to prepare him for the fatigues and dangers of war." Musical training was given in order "to humanize his mind, to soften the temper, and to dispose it for performing all the social and moral duties both of public and private life."

Smith does not appear altogether convinced, however, that musical education was essential in the development of social and moral behaviour. He remarked that the morals of the Romans "were upon the whole superior" to those of the Greeks in spite of the fact that they received no musical education. He concludes that music and dancing appear to be part of the education of all tribal societies and that it is, therefore, "natural" that when such societies

²⁵'Lectures on Justice', op. cit., p. 256.

advance, as in the case of the Greek tribes, "the study of those accomplishments should, for a long time, make part of the public and common education of the people."²⁶

So far as moral education is concerned Smith appears convinced that the family is the primary agent of moral and social education. He does not exclude the possibility, however, that such education could be enhanced by physical and cultural training provided by the public sector.

d) The Curriculum

The trend towards a more 'practical' curriculum in the late eighteenth century in Scotland is reflected in Smith's recommendations for a curriculum in the parish schools of Scotland and the charity schools in England which would show some relevance to the needs of everyday life of the poorer classes.

"If in those little schools the books, by which the children are to read, were a little more instructive than they commonly are; and if, instead of a little smattering of Latin, which the children of the common people are sometimes taught there, and which can scarce be of any use to them; they were instructed in the elementary parts of geometry and mechanics, the literary education of this rank of common people would perhaps be as complete as it can be. There is scarce a common trade which does not afford some opportunities of applying to it the principles

²⁶'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., pp. 728-730.

of geometry and mechanics, and which would not therefore gradually exercise and improve the common people in those principles, the necessary introduction to the sublime as well as to the most useful sciences."²⁷

One or two points require some clarification here. In the first place, the term 'mechanics' in the eighteenth century context involved more than an association with machines; it was applied in a way so as to include concepts which would now come under the category of 'physics', such as the laws of motion and equilibrium. In fact, problems of mechanics were then seen as being very closely related to problems in mathematics and physics. "During the eighteenth century...mathematics and theoretical physics were more closely interrelated in their development than at any time in their previous or subsequent history. This inter-connection was of benefit to both sides; the multitude of mechanical and physical problems stimulated the purely analytical investigations which helped to solve them."²⁸

When Smith, therefore, talks of the "useful" and the "sublime" sciences he must be understood to mean, on the one hand, the practical application of the principles of 'mechanics' in fields such as engineering and technology and, on the other, the use of such principles in the more

²⁷Ibid., Bk. V, Ch. I, Pt. III, Art. 2, pp. 737-738.

²⁸Wolf, A., A History of Science, Technology and Philosophy in the Eighteenth Century, Allen & Unwin, Second Edition 1962, London, p. 45.

theoretical fields of physics, mathematics, astronomy.

Secondly, when he says that such a curriculum might be adequate for the "literary education of this rank of common people" he is not implying that such people should not be given any further education. He is rather suggesting curriculum improvements that would make education more meaningful to the "common people" by providing them with the opportunity to improve themselves without imposing on them the educational values of a higher social order which he regarded as being out of date in any case.

Intellectually, he left the door wide open when he said that the "principles of geometry and mechanics" are a "necessary introduction to the most sublime as well as to the most useful sciences" and when he expressed the thought that the difference "between a philosopher and a common porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom and education."²⁹

Furthermore, when he referred to religious education as contributing to the moral education of the children of the poor he added that such education also provided the ground for "thought and speculation", hardly the sort of activity that would encourage adherence to blind belief or rejection of further study and inquiry. Indeed, Smith expected the lower classes to benefit from an expansion of science and the scientific attitude. "Science is the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition; and where all the superior ranks of people

²⁹'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. II, p. 15.

were secured from it, the inferior ranks should not be much exposed to it."³⁰

Smith was much more explicit and critical on the question of the University curriculum. He attacked the detrimental effect, as he saw it, that the need for the study of theology had had on the "natural" division of the disciplines of study and the growth of knowledge. He decried the fact that most University courses had become theology-oriented in most of the Universities of his day, at a time when such institutions were no longer engaged solely in the training of theologians.

"The ancient Greek philosophy was divided into three great branches; physics or natural philosophy; ethics or moral philosophy; and logic. This general division seems perfectly agreeable to the nature of things." In the European Universities these three branches changed into five. Metaphysics or Pneumatology, "comprehending the doctrine concerning the nature of the human soul and of the Deity", grew out of Physics, was given priority over it and was "set in opposition" to it. As a result "the proper subject of experiment and observation, a subject in which a careful attention is capable of making so many useful discoveries, was almost entirely neglected."³¹

The division of natural philosophy into Metaphysics and Physics necessitated the creation of Ontology and

³⁰Ibid., p. 748.

³¹Ibid., pp. 725-726.

"if subtleties and sophisms composed the greater part of the Metaphysics or Pneumatics of the schools, they composed the whole of this cobweb science of Ontology, which was likewise sometimes called Metaphysics." As for Moral Philosophy, it was "debased", it became, like Natural Philosophy, "subservient" to theology and degenerated into "casuistry and an ascetic morality." Similarly, the course in Physics became "short and superficial."³²

Seen in a wider context than that of the division into study disciplines Smith's complaint was directed against the failure of the Universities to adopt a foundation in their study of man and nature which was removed from the theological approach. But his demand did not imply the rejection of a metaphysical foundation. He was, in essence, urging the adoption of an approach that would maintain man's important place in the cosmos but that would do so on empirical grounds and not on the 'apriorism' of theology. In his concept of what constituted pre-medieval philosophy he placed the "human mind" and the "Deity" in the realm of Physics and treated them with equal emphasis:

"In the ancient philosophy, whatever was taught concerning the nature either of the human mind or of the Deity, made a part of the system of physics. Those things, in whatever their essence might be supposed to consist, were parts of the great system of the universe,

³²Ibid., pp. 725-727.

and parts too productive of the most important effects."³³ He was, in other words, in line with Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, James, Bergson, all of whom, as E. A. Burttt demonstrated, were "united in one earnest attempt to reinstate man with his high spiritual claims in a place of importance in the cosmic scheme."³⁴

Seen in that light his concept of the virtuous man in society and his concepts of a "natural" order, "natural" liberty, the "invisible hand", the "impartial spectator", all form interrelated parts in a concept which sees man and his society as part of a cosmological equilibrium. Any attempts, deliberate or otherwise, to impede or obstruct in any way the prevalence of the interest of the virtuous man in society can, thus, be seen as an "unnatural" development. For Smith, there was much in the late eighteenth century that did precisely that.

It was in this light that Smith noted the demoralization and frustration that meet the individual when he moves to a large urban centre. Smith found that the church was unable to provide a solution to such problems. An individual who moves to the city, he said, either becomes corrupted, succumbs to vice and adopts an anti-social behaviour or, in order to preserve his identity and strengthen his morale, joins a "little religious sect"

³³Ibid., p. 725.

³⁴Burttt, E. A., The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science, Doubleday, New York, 1954, p. 25.

which imposes such strict canons of behaviour on its members that they become anti-social in the opposite extreme.³⁵ He suggested as a solution, on the one hand, the expansion of the sort of education that would lead to further expansion of knowledge and, on the other, the encouragement of greater cultural activity.

Smith put his suggestions this way: "The first of those remedies is the study of science and philosophy, which the state might render almost universal among all people of middling or more than middling rank and fortune; not by giving salaries to teachers in order to make them negligent and idle, but by instituting some sort of probation, even in the higher and more difficult sciences, to be undergone by every person before he was permitted to exercise any liberal profession, or before he could be received as a candidate for any honourable office of trust or profit.

The second of those remedies is the frequency and gaiety of public diversions. The state, by encouraging, that is by giving entire liberty to all those who for their own interest would attempt, without scandal or indecency, to amuse and divert the people by painting, poetry, music, dancing; by all sorts of dramatic representations and exhibitions would easily dissipate, in the greater part of them, their melancholy and gloomy humour which is almost always the nurse of popular superstition and enthusiasm."³⁶

³⁵ 'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., pp. 747-748.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 748.

By advocating the study of science and philosophy in this way Smith is, in effect, advocating the popularization of an education that placed less reliance on church doctrine and religious instruction and more emphasis on empirical knowledge. He saw science and philosophy as interwoven fields of study, the one concentrating on the examination of the actual phenomena of nature and the other endeavouring to bring about some understanding of nature as a whole on the basis of empirical observation.

In his essay on 'The History of Astronomy' Smith, in fact, defined philosophy as "that science which pretends to lay open the concealed connections that unite the various appearances of nature"³⁷ and, as he did in his 'Wealth of Nations', condemned the sort of philosophy that ignores the discoveries of science and rejects empiricism as its method.³⁸

In his study of Smith's philosophy of science, H. F. Thomson points out that Smith's concept of science and philosophy as a method of studying and understanding the phenomena and laws of nature resembles not only David Hume's views but also those of Albert Einstein.³⁹

³⁷Smith, Adam, 'Essays on Philosophical Subjects: The History of Astronomy', The Works of Adam Smith, Vol. V, Reprint of the 1811-1812 edition, Aalen, Otto Zeller, 1963, p. 89.

³⁸Ibid., p. 115.

³⁹Thomson, H. F., 'Adam Smith's Philosophy of Science', Quarterly Journal of Economics, Vol. 79, May 1965, p. 223.

In his suggestion about the encouragement of free cultural and artistic expression Smith exhibits a concept of education far in advance of what was generally regarded as educative in his day. His suggestion that such an education might contribute towards the elimination of social ills, demonstrates an understanding of the social implications of an educational policy that provides ample opportunity for all aspects of human endeavour. Indeed, in his 'Essay on the Imitative Arts' Smith points to a connection between entertainment and what is socially desirable: "A whole entertainment may consist, without any impropriety, of the imitation of the social and amiable passions. It would be strange entertainment which consisted altogether in the imitation of the odious and the vicious."⁴⁰

e) Methodology

Smith's classroom experience extended over a period of fifteen years. During this time he acquired a great reputation as a lecturer and, as a result, his references to teaching methods, scant as they are, are colored by his personal success. Nevertheless, they help illustrate his points about the intellectual and professional honesty of the teacher.

In the first place, he finds that it is difficult for the self-respecting teacher to employ any satisfactory method unless he himself believes in the value of what he is teaching. "If the teacher happens to be a man of

⁴⁰'Essays on Philosophical Subjects', op. cit., p. 277.

sense, it must be an unpleasant thing to him to be conscious, while he is lecturing his students, that he is either speaking or reading nonsense, or what is very little better than nonsense. It must too be unpleasant to him to observe that the greater part of his students desert his lectures; or perhaps attend upon them with plain enough marks of neglect, contempt and derision."

This should be incentive enough for the teacher to do his best to prepare himself diligently and lecture well. "If he is obliged, therefore, to give a certain number of lectures, these motives alone, without any other interest might dispose him to take some pains to give tolerably good ones." Still, if the teacher is determined to avoid the lecture method he can employ other methods which, says Smith, are not as good. As for regular attendance, the teacher can rest assured that college discipline, which "is in general contrived, not for the benefit of the students, but for the interest, or more properly speaking, for the ease of the masters", will see to that.

He writes on these less effective methods as follows: "The teacher, instead of explaining to his pupils himself the science in which he proposes to instruct them, may read some book upon it; and if this book is written in a foreign and dead language, by interpreting it to them into their own; or what would give him still less trouble, by making them interpret it to him, and by now and then making an occasional remark upon it, he may flatter himself that he is giving a lecture. The slightest degree of knowledge and application

will enable him to do this, without exposing himself to contempt or derision, or saying any thing that is really foolish, absurd, or ridiculous. The discipline of the college, at the same time, may enable him to force all his pupils to the most regular attendance upon this sham-lecture, and to maintain the most decent and respectful behaviour during the whole time of the performance."⁴¹

Smith, then, came to the conclusion that the well-prepared lecture was the best teaching method and that the proof of the success of such a method was to be found in the voluntary attendance of the students.

His own 'Lectures on Justice' and the 'Lectures on the Belles Lettres' as well as his 'Theory of Moral Sentiments', the style of which indicates that it was based on his university lectures on moral philosophy, show signs that would account for his popularity as a lecturer. There is a profusion of historical illustration of many of the points he makes; there are many topical and pointed remarks, always relevant to the argument, which must have amused his listeners and his points are presented in an orderly, if somewhat elaborate, fashion.

Two of his students, who themselves became Professors at Glasgow, wrote about his lectures. Professor Richardson wrote: "Those who received instruction from Dr. Smith,

⁴¹'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. V, Ch. I, Pt. III, Art. 2, p. 720.

will recollect with much satisfaction many of those incidental and digressive illustrations and discussions, not only in morality but in criticism, which were delivered by him with animated and extemporaneous eloquence as they were suggested in the course of question and answer. They occurred likewise, with much display of learning and knowledge, in his occasional explanations of those philosophical works, which were also a very useful and important subject of examination in the class of moral philosophy."

Professor Millar was a little more analytical: "There was no situation in which the abilities of Mr. Smith appeared to greater advantage than as a professor. In delivering his lectures he trusted almost entirely to extemporary elocution. His manner, though not graceful, was plain and unaffected, and as he seemed to be always interested in the subject, he never failed to interest his hearers. Each discourse consisted commonly of several distinct propositions, which he successively endeavoured to prove and illustrate. These propositions when announced in general terms had, from their extent, not infrequently something in the air of a paradox. In his attempts to explain them, he often appeared at first not to be sufficiently possessed of the subject, and spoke with hesitation. As he advanced, however, his manner became warm and animated, and his expression easy and fluent. On points susceptible of controversy you could easily discern that he secretly conceived an opposition to his opinions, and that he was led upon this account to support them with greater energy

and vehemence. By the fulness and variety of his illustrations the subject gradually swelled in his hands and acquired a dimension which, without a tedious repetition of the same views, was calculated to seize the attention of his audience, and to afford them pleasure as well as instruction in following the same subject through all the diversity of shades and aspects in which it was presented, and afterwards in tracing it backwards to that original proposition or general truth from which this beautiful train of speculation had proceeded."⁴²

Clearly, Smith's lectures were no mere recitation of points and must have been diligently prepared in advance.

Apart from the question of instructional method Smith made some remarks which apply to work and study methods. In dealing with the effects of the division of labour Smith found that, generally, specialization and concentration has beneficial effects: "Men are much more likely to discover easier and readier methods of attaining any object, when the whole attention of their minds is directed towards that single object, than when it is dissipated among a great variety of things." This effect is to be seen not only in matters of economic production but also in fields of academic learning and even "philosophy or speculation" benefit from a concentration on narrow areas of study through an

⁴²Rae, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

increase in the intellectual dexterity of the scholars:
 "...this subdivision of employment in philosophy, as well as in every other business, improves dexterity, and saves time. Every individual becomes more expert in his peculiar branch, more work is done upon the whole, and the quantity of science is considerably increased by it."⁴³

Smith, however, also made a statement which is in sharp contradiction to the above. It is his statement on the detrimental effects of the division of labour on the attitude of the ordinary citizen which was quoted earlier (see above pp. 85-86).

E. G. West⁴⁴ explains this contradiction by suggesting that in making this latter statement Smith had in mind the inadequacy or lack of educational and other facilities for urban workers who, having nothing else to occupy themselves with after the tedium of work in the rising factory system, become totally demoralized and lose all initiative and ability for independent thinking. In other words, Smith was not thinking of teaching methods when he made that observation but of the lack of teaching altogether. This explanation may very well be correct because at one point Smith did, in fact, remark upon the appropriateness of specialization in

⁴³'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. I, pp. 9-10.

⁴⁴West, E. G., 'Adam Smith's Two Views on the Division of Labour', Economica, New Series, Vol. XXXI, Nos. 121-124, 1964, pp. 23-32.

teaching: "To impose upon any man the necessity of teaching, year after year, any particular branch of science, seems, in reality, to be the most effectual method of rendering him completely master of it himself. By being obliged to go every year over the same ground, if he is good for any thing, he necessarily becomes, in a few years, well acquainted with every part of it; and if upon any particular point he should form too hasty an opinion one year, when he comes in the course of his lectures to re-consider the same subject the year thereafter, he is very likely to correct it."⁴⁵

There is also the question of the method which Smith himself employed in his research and investigations. The historian H. T. Buckle in discussing Smith's work concluded that both his 'Theory of Moral Sentiments' and his 'Wealth of Nations' are a product of Smith's deductive method.⁴⁶ In his study of Smith's method, however, H. J. Bittermann rejects Buckle's conclusion.⁴⁷ He describes Smith's methodology as "essentially empirical, deriving its inspiration from Newton and Hume in contrast to the rationalistic method." He points out that these terms should be interpreted with the British empiricists in mind, like Locke and Hume, who "contrasted their own method of reasoning with that of the Cartesians and other 'rationalists'".

⁴⁵'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. V, Ch. I, Pt. III, Art. III, p. 764.

⁴⁶Buckle, H. T., op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 340-357.

⁴⁷Bittermann, H. J., 'Adam Smith's Empiricism and the Law of Nature', The Journal of Political Economy, Vol. XLVIII, No. 4, August 1940, pp. 487-520.

While Smith never formulated a method of investigation either in the study of ethics or economics, Bittermann suggests that Smith believed that the principles of ethics and economics could be discovered by induction from sense data and the application of the scientific method. Although this method may be employed with validity in such an effort what cannot avoid normative implications is the effort to synthesize the two: "One of the achievements of Adam Smith was to apply the experimental method to the problems of economics and ethics and to formulate valid 'systems'. His weakness was, perhaps, the belief that the data observed would yield valid normative ideals."⁴⁸

Morrow, on the other hand, may be closer to the truth when he asserts that Smith's method was a "combination of induction and deduction, as was common among the group of Scottish writers to which Adam Smith belonged."⁴⁹ It might also be pointed out that the method Smith employed in his lectures according to Professor Millar (see p. 104) above), i.e. starting with a proposition and then proceeding to prove it, may reflect also the method that Smith partly employed in his researches.

Finally, on the question of motivation Smith appears to have been of the opinion that the best and most 'natural' motivation is to arouse the student's desire for knowledge

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 506-507.

⁴⁹ Morrow, op. cit., p. 7.

for its own sake. In the first place, he associated the search for knowledge with real personal discipline thus making the search for knowledge the true motivation for study. Furthermore, in his 'History of Astronomy' he stated that "Wonder, and not any expectation of advantage from its discoveries, is the first principle which prompts mankind to the study of Philosophy."⁵⁰ Thus, for Smith no effort at motivation in education which did not aim, primarily, at arousing the individual's curiosity was likely to succeed as well as one that did.

At one point in the 'Wealth of Nations' he suggested that young students could be encouraged by the granting of awards⁵¹ but he did not suggest or imply that he regarded this as the ideal type of motivation.

f) Summary of Smith's Argument

Smith's attack on the state of education in his day parallels his attack on all institutional arrangements in society which tended to stifle the individual's efforts at self-improvement. On the economic level he attacked the privileges and monopolies that government, guilds and trade associations conferred. On the educational level he attacked those educational institutions that allowed such neglect of teaching duties or such disregard for the demands of scholarship among the teachers as to frustrate any efforts on the part of the individual to acquire knowledge connected with the "useful" and the

⁵⁰'Essays on Philosophical Subjects', op. cit., p. 89.

⁵¹'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. V, Ch. I, Pt. III Art. III, p. 738.

"sublime" sciences, which is what Smith regarded as knowledge of any worth.

He placed the blame for such a state of affairs mainly on the fact that the church, as an institution, and theology, as a discipline, still remained well-entrenched in all aspects of education. As a result, the curriculum of the higher levels seemed to be still geared to the narrow needs of theological training while at the lower levels it reflected those needs by providing little more than what amounted to the prerequisites for that training. The detrimental effects, he argued, could be seen in a variety of ways.

Education became anachronistic and meaningless and was no longer relevant to the needs of everyday living; it failed to train the individual to assess political issues with an intelligent appreciation of the facts and of the 'true' interests of society as a whole: it did little to inculcate moral values in the individual that would induce him to exercise tolerance and understanding in his social relations; it failed to provide a cure for the social and personal problems that the new system of production and the growth in urban living were creating. In a word, education was failing in its primary purpose of encouraging and helping the individual to develop his abilities as an individual and as a member of a society.

B. SUMMARY OF ADAM SMITH'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION

To such a state of affairs Smith offered some solutions which were consistent with his general philosophic thought

and which were based to a large extent on his personal experience as a student and professor.

First. Smith recommended the provision of educational facilities for all children by suggesting the establishment of a school in every parish or district in the country.⁵²

Such parish schools already did exist throughout Scotland. As shown in Chapter 1, the principle of public education in Scotland can be traced to John Knox, the 'Act for Settling of Schools' of 1696 and the work of the 'Society in Scotland for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge' at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Whereas, however, these earlier movements were motivated by a desire to spread religious knowledge, Smith justified his support for public education on different grounds. He saw in the expansion of a more 'practical' education the opportunity for the citizen to play a more intelligent role in society. He felt that an education that was relevant to everyday practical reality, that would help the student become a little more empirical in his general approach could be an antidote to "superstition and enthusiasm" and could help the citizen resist the pressures of demagoguery and blind belief with a rational assessment of political and social issues.

Second. If this was to take place then education had to be made available to all and in a way that would strengthen and not weaken the sense of personal responsibility

⁵²Ibid., p. 737.

of the persons involved. For this reason Smith advocated not free education but a combination of public and private financing which would allow not for no fees at all but for such low fees that "even a common labourer may afford" them.⁵³ Public support of education for Smith meant, then, not free education but the subsidization of education only to the point of making it possible for all parents to contribute directly towards the financing of the education of their children.

Such financing was already in practice in Scotland in the eighteenth century. It involved both support by endowments and the payment of fees by students. For instance, in the University of Glasgow the Chair of Mathematics received an endowment of £72 per year but, in addition, there were the fees paid by the students taking the course and these could vary up to £100 per year.⁵⁴

Third. From this follows the suggestion that teachers' salaries should bear a direct relationship to the fees paid by students, otherwise the teacher "would soon learn to neglect his business."⁵⁵ Thus the teacher would be able to see directly the reward for his labour through the increased number of students who joined his class. In the case of Smith himself, he personally returned the fees to his students when, in his last year as a Professor, he left the University before the end of the term.⁵⁶

⁵³Ibid., p. 737.

⁵⁴Rae, op. cit., p. 48.

⁵⁵'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., p. 737.

⁵⁶Rae, op. cit., p. 170.

Fourth. It follows from the above that, as Smith recommended, the students should be free to choose their teacher, their courses and their college. This, Smith argued, would encourage competition and would lead to an improvement in instruction.⁵⁷

Such was already the practice in the second half of the eighteenth century in Scotland with the rise of the private schools and the Academies, as was shown in Chapter II. This recommendation was also directly derived from Smith's own experience. He was enabled to attend Oxford through a fellowship awarded to him by the University of Glasgow known as the Snell Exhibition. This fellowship restricted attendance to Balliol College only and in 1744, when Smith was at Oxford, the Snell Exhibitioners requested from the Glasgow University Senate that they be allowed to transfer to other colleges. This request was not put into effect until 1776, shortly after the publication of the 'Wealth of Nations', when the authorities of Glasgow University allowed each Snell Exhibitioner to enter the Oxford college of his choice.⁵⁸

Fifth. Although Smith urged the expansion of public education and suggested means which would make education financially feasible for everyone, he stopped short of advocating compulsory education. One might expect that if his concern for public education were sincere he would have

⁵⁷'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., p. 717.

⁵⁸Rae, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

advocated compulsory education. Yet any advocacy of compulsory education on his part would have been inconsistent with the emphasis he placed on the personal responsibility of his virtuous man. Instead, therefore, of compelling he preferred to induce and so instead of making education compulsory he suggested the setting up of examinations for entrance into one of the trades, professions or "office of trust", leaving it up to the individual to improve his position in society.⁵⁹

Although such an arrangement could still determine to some extent, at least, the avenues through which such an improvement in the individual's position in society could take place, Smith never specified how such examinations should be set up and by whom they should be conducted. It is doubtful, however, that he envisaged a 'monopolistic' right for a trade or a profession to control admission. In general, he criticized guilds and trade associations for exercising that sort of control on their members and, consequently, over the public. In particular, he refused to support a petition to Parliament by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh in 1774 to prohibit the Universities from granting medical degrees and to grant this right only to the College of Physicians.⁶⁰ Here too he saw competition among the Universities as the safeguard against the exploitation of the public by the vested interests of an organized professional group.

⁵⁹'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., pp. 738 and 748.

⁶⁰Rae, op. cit., p. 273.

Sixth. The emphasis on personal responsibility is also shown in what Smith said about moral education. He identified such education with the upbringing that the child receives in the family. In this way he placed the responsibility primarily in the hands of the parents. He would reduce the responsibility of a religious or any institution other than the family in moral education. Nevertheless, as was pointed out, Smith did not exclude the possibility that moral and social education could be enhanced by the public encouragement of physical and cultural accomplishments.⁶¹

Seventh. Smith's recommendations on curriculum comprise, first, those in which he stressed the need for 'practical' courses in addition to the three Rs, especially for those students who were destined for employment at a very young age.⁶²

Secondly, his criticism of the curriculum in higher education in his day and his approval of, as he saw it, the unity of scientific and philosophical thought in Greek philosophy together with his suggestions for the encouragement of "science and philosophy" point to a recommendation for an increase in science courses and for a more empirical, in contrast to an 'a priori', approach in the search for knowledge.⁶³

⁶¹See pp. 88-93 above.

⁶²See pp. 93-96 above.

⁶³See pp. 96-98 above.

Thirdly, he advocated the introduction of adult education when he suggested that the teaching of "science and philosophy" and the expansion of cultural activities for "people of all ages" could be regarded as a remedy for the problems which an individual faces in his attempts to adjust to an urban environment.⁶⁴

These recommendations reflect the unusually forward-looking, liberal approach that Smith experienced at the University of Glasgow which introduced a number of what must have been regarded, at that time, as revolutionary innovations.

When Smith was still a student at Glasgow, from 1737 to 1740, Hutcheson used the vernacular instead of Latin in delivering his lectures on Moral Philosophy--a rather revolutionary move at the time. Further and more extensive innovations, however, began shortly before Smith started his tenure as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow in 1751.

John Rae⁶⁵ gave an account of these innovations and of the progressive and liberal approach that prevailed at Glasgow University at the time. The University authorities, he wrote, "were guided in their general policy at this period by the wisest and most enlightened spirit of academic enlargement." A few years before Smith's appointment they established a "chemical laboratory" where,

⁶⁴See above pp. 98-101.

⁶⁵Rae, op. cit., pp. 71-79.

during Smith's tenure, Dr. Black was doing research leading to his discovery of latent heat. Between 1751 and 1764, the period of Smith's professorship, the University authorities gave a "workshop" to James Watt, opened a "printing office" and planned the establishment of an "Academy of Design" so that the arts of painting, sculpture, and engraving were taught in the College as well as the Classics and Mathematics"--and this at a time when "there was as yet no Royal Academy, no National Gallery, no South Kensington Museum, no technical colleges."

Furthermore, the University "entertained in 1761 the idea of doing something for the promotion of athletics among the students, and had under consideration a proposal for the establishment of a new academy of dancing, fencing and riding in the University." As for Smith's position in all this it could not have been either a negative or a passive one since he was involved in the administration of the University and it is known that he was "one of the active promoters of this (latter) scheme... for it is he who is chosen by the Senate on the 22nd of December 1761 to go in their name and explain their design to the Rector, Lord Erroll, and request his assistance."

What appears as an exception to such innovations, however, must be mentioned here. One development which Smith and the University authorities together with the authorities of the city of Glasgow clearly opposed was the establishment of a playhouse in the city in 1762. This appears to be in contradiction to Smith's suggestions for the encouragement of the theatre arts when performed without,

as he put it, "scandal or indecency." Rae, however, points out that the move must be seen within the context of the "general improprieties permissible on the English stage at that time" and also with a consideration of "the fact that locally great offence had quite recently been given in Scotland by the profane or immoral character of some of the pieces presented" on the Scottish stage.⁶⁶

Smith was a witness to the success of an early example of adult education. The University of Glasgow "had already done something for that popularization of academic instruction which we call university extension. Professor Anderson, an active and reforming spirit, ...used then to deliver within the College walls, with the complete concurrence and encouragement of his colleagues, a series of evening lectures on natural philosophy to classes of working-men in their working clothes, and the lectures are generally acknowledged to have done great service to the arts and manufactures of the West of Scotland, by improving the technical education of the higher grades of artisans."⁶⁷

The evidence both for the need of such reforms and of their feasibility was there for Smith to attest in concrete, practical terms.

C. CONCLUSION

This examination of Smith's views on education should have demonstrated their general consistency with his

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 83.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 72-73.

philosophical outlook. The emphasis that he placed on individual freedom of action in society was based on an assumption of extensive personal moral responsibility. This entailed a minimum amount of externally imposed obligations on the individual and the greatest possible reliance on the development of a personal sense of obligation, originally through sympathy, which would tend to identify self-interest with the interest of society as a whole.

Hence, in education, the absence of an outright compulsory education, the subsidization but not control of education by the public authority, the placing of moral education primarily in the hands of the family, the emphasis on the personal relations between teacher and student, the freedom to choose courses, teachers and colleges, the association of discipline with the sincere desire for knowledge and learning, the provision for courses directly connected with 'practical' reality, the underlying connection between 'practical' courses and 'theoretical' courses which seek 'ultimate' reality.

If we accept, then, the thesis that the pursuit of self-interest in Smith's theory is based on a concept of extensive personal moral responsibility his recommendations on education appear to be, on the whole, consistent with the rest of his thought. Any suggestion, therefore, that Smith derived his views on education from one or another educational theorist would have to account for this general consistency. In addition, it would have to demonstrate that Smith's own experience as a student and professor had little, if any, bearing in the formulation of educational views.

It seems much more likely that Smith based his educational ideas on actual practice and his personal experience; and just as he interpreted the economic and social data in his day from his own peculiar philosophical standpoint so he treated the educational data with a concept of the ideal man which was consistent with this philosophical standpoint.

It might be argued that some educational ideas that he supported originated from a different philosophical foundation. More specifically, the idea of public support of education in Scotland was based to a large extent on the religious foundation of the teachings of John Knox, and such a foundation was quite different from Smith's philosophy and deism. Yet this should not seem so paradoxical if one bears in mind that such a transposition appears to have taken place in the educational ideas of other theorists. An example might help to strengthen the point.

The influence that actual educational practice in Scotland and through it the influence of John Knox's ideas on education have exerted can be seen also in the case of Thomas Jefferson. Dealing with the latter as an "Educational Innovator", James B. Conant finds that it was Scotland that was the source of Jefferson's ideas about schools and universities.⁶⁸ He points out, for example, that Jefferson's bill on education bears striking similarities

⁶⁸Conant, J. B., Thomas Jefferson and the Development of American Public Education. University of California Press, Berkeley 1962, pp. 17-19.

to that of John Knox for whom the church took the place of the state.

R. J. Honeywell⁶⁹ informs us that Jefferson's library included a copy of Russel's 'View of the System of Education in the Schools and Universities of Scotland', published in Edinburgh in 1813, and asserts that Russel's work is the only one "which with any confidence can be said to have contributed to Jefferson's educational plans."

Honeywell gives a brief account of Russel's recommendations. While it is doubtful that Smith would have agreed with all of them (as, for instance, with the suggestion that a roll call be held to ensure attendance) he would have agreed with one, indeed a very significant one, with which Jefferson appears to have been sympathetic. Russel recommended the study of mathematics, natural philosophy, logic and ethics, a recommendation which is not too different from Jefferson's suggestion of languages, mathematics, physics and chemistry.

If Conant had examined Smith's ideas on education, and their philosophical and practical origins, he would have found it, perhaps, less of a paradox that Jefferson, a deist like Smith, would have adopted ideas that could be traced back to John Knox.

Conant's hypothesis is that "a sixteenth-century educational scheme put forward to perpetuate a spiritual

⁶⁹Honeywell, R. J., The Educational Work of Thomas Jefferson, Russell & Russell, N. Y. 1964, pp. 161-163.

tyranny became, through Jefferson's eighteenth-century alchemy, a grand innovation to secure religious freedom and personal liberty..." If such a hypothesis is valid in the case of Thomas Jefferson it is no less valid in the case of Adam Smith.

It must also be borne in mind that the late eighteenth-century Scottish society of the 'Enlightenment', material progress and "academic enlargement", in which Smith developed his ideas, was itself emerging from the dominance of a more doctrinaire Calvinistic environment.

In the century that followed Smith much of the argument and agitation in the field of education in England concerned the question of public involvement in education. It is difficult to assess the extent to which Smith's educational views influenced directly the various stands taken on the issue. On the other hand, it is possible to show that in practical issues in education it was his economic rather than his educational theory that tended to influence the educational policy-makers.

In educational theory Smith's ideas have been compared with those of the utilitarians. There are, however, fundamental differences between Smith and the utilitarians which arise from differences in philosophical outlook.

The concluding chapter will deal, first, with these differences in educational theory and, secondly, with Smith's influence in practical issues of education.

CHAPTER V

ADAM SMITH'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION AND ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL THOUGHT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Smith's economic philosophy was based on the assumption that ultimate virtue is to be found in the prudent man. The prudent man's self-interest is identified with 'natural' economic progress, and the prudent man's characteristics are identified with those who exercise their labour to earn their living. This, however, is by no means evident to this latter group of people, especially to those whose judgment has been thwarted by the detrimental effects of the division of labour and who have not had the sort of education that would stimulate their mind and keep their interest in their own progress alive.

Smith expresses quite explicitly his support for the view that such knowledge is necessary. The landowners, he says, ought to have a tolerable knowledge of the fact that their self-interest is identical with that of the society as a whole. Yet they are "too often defective in this tolerable knowledge."

As for the labourer, although his interest "is strictly connected with that of the society, he is incapable either of comprehending that interest, or of understanding its connexion with his own. His condition leaves him no time to receive the necessary information, and his education and habits are commonly such as to render him unfit to judge even though he was fully informed. In the public deliberations, therefore, his voice is little heard and

less regarded, except upon some particular occasions, when his clamour is animated, set on, and supported by his employers, not for his, but for their own particular purposes."

It is precisely those whose self-interest is not identical with that of the society, the "merchants and master manufacturers", who seem to have ample opportunities for exercising their judgment because "they are engaged in plans and projects." But their judgment is employed in promoting their own self-interest, not the interest of the society, and it is because of their "superior knowledge of their own interest" that they succeed in persuading the public that their own self-interest is identical with that of the society.¹

Obviously, then, the significance of political education did not escape Smith's notice and he expressed the need for an awareness of one's position and contribution in what he regarded as the 'natural' order in society.

By the late eighteenth century the views which, in a variety of ways, expressed the conviction that education and social environment were paramount in moulding man's mind, and which could be traced back to Locke, had crystalised into two main currents. One was the belief in political equality and justice which tended to be more revolutionary in its expression, while the other was

¹'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., pp. 249-250.

expressed in the utilitarian school with its slogan of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number."² Smith was, clearly, no revolutionary and his position seems closer to that of the utilitarians, although it is by no means identical with it.

If Smith accepted the view that political awareness for all was desirable, as he seems to have done, then the question arises as to how he hoped to achieve such awareness in the individual. He did not say or imply that the "judgment" of the "merchants and master manufacturers" was stimulated by anything specific they received in the way of formal education. Nor did he advocate the teaching of any courses designed specifically for imparting political knowledge. Furthermore, in dealing with the labourer he pointed out that even if the labourer were "fully informed" his "education and habits", (not his nature, it should be pointed out) "are commonly such as to render him unfit to judge." Thus, the emphasis that he placed as regards political education was not placed on "information" but on "judgment".

The answer then appears to be that Smith expected the studies he advocated to stimulate one's mental capacity and sharpen one's "judgment". Furthermore, he seems to have expected that such "judgment" would demonstrate to the individual the 'natural' order in society, an order

²Silver, H., The Concept of Popular Education, MacGibbon & Kee, London 1965, pp. 53-54.

of 'natural' liberty, which was consistent with the prudent man's self-interest. Smith expected, as was pointed out earlier, that empirical examination of nature and society would automatically reveal the 'system' to which his interpretation of the data led him. As has already been shown, Smith saw philosophy as the "science" which attempts to reveal "the concealed connections that unite the various appearances of nature" and physics as including the study of man and the Deity as "parts of the great system of the Universe."³

It would appear, then, that in his educational views, just as in the rest of his thought, Smith preserved the eighteenth-century emphasis on Nature and the belief in a 'natural' order. It is this emphasis on Nature, the 'natural' order and the 'natural' identity of interests that accounts for the rather fundamental differences between his educational views and those of the utilitarian school.

a) Theoretical differences between Smith and the Utilitarians

Smith's line of thought on education parallels that of Helvetius in some respects. Helvetius refrained from prescribing detailed measures for the extension of popular education. On the one hand, he thought it futile to do so when even the most obvious abuses were simply being ignored. On the other hand, he did not wish to proceed in

³See pp. 96 and 100 above.

a manner that would suddenly upset the established patterns of society.⁴ He, nevertheless, advocated that the people should be educated to see that the driving force in human affairs was the self-interest involved in the search for pleasure and the avoidance of pain.⁵

Much of this utilitarian type of thought would be in line with Smith's ideas up to a point. Smith, however, emphasized the importance of the way of pursuing that self-interest. He based the identification of interest, between individual and society, on economic grounds and on the assumption of the moral worth of a certain type of economic behaviour. Coupled with this was his view of the nature of the institutional arrangements within which that economic behaviour would be promoted and the 'natural' balance of interests would be achieved.

Unlike the utilitarians, Smith's 'institutional arrangements involved the minimum of state or collective activism. Bentham accepted Smith's general economic system but he also repeatedly acknowledged the debt he owed Helvetius⁶ who stressed the identity of morality and legislation and maintained that virtuous men can be made only through good laws.⁷ It was from the latter's ideas

⁴Silver, op. cit., p. 60.

⁵Ibid., p. 61.

⁶Mack, M. P., Jeremy Bentham, An Odyssey of Ideas 1748-1792, Heinemann, London, 1962, pp. 104-105.

⁷Halevy, Elie, The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism, Beacon, Boston, 1955, p. 20.

that Bentham developed his utilitarianism. Helvetius emphasized the role of the legislator as an educator⁸ and to a jurist like Bentham, who made very little distinction between morals and legislation,⁹ this was much more appealing than the individualistic morality that Smith preached.

Bentham appears more prescriptive than Smith in his educational writings. He argued for a strictly utilitarian type of public education giving priority to vocational training and training in prudent behaviour so that the poor would be contented with their lot and would not be inspired with unattainable ambitions.¹⁰ He rejected religion in public education and gave little attention to the encouragement of cultural pursuits in the schools. Bentham's suggestion that his Panopticon plan could serve the purpose of supervision and discipline in the schools just as it could in the prisons goes a long way to illustrate the deep differences in the attitude to education between him, a jurist, and Smith, a teacher.

Smith would have agreed with the emphasis on vocational training in the public schools. He would have minimized the importance of religious education but he

⁸Ibid., p. 20.

⁹Manning, D. J., The Mind of Jeremy Bentham, Monographs in Politics, Longmans, London 1968, pp. 106-107.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 106-107.

never actually rejected it; nor would he have discouraged the inclusion of cultural and scientific subjects. True discipline to Smith could not be imposed externally and he was more inclined to emphasize the personal relationship between the teacher and the student. He expected that love for knowledge and respect for those who pursued it honestly would be sufficient inducement to order and discipline. But then, as L. S. Feuer points out, Smith found that it was in the independent life of the scientist, the "mathematician" and the "natural philosopher", that "the hedonist-libertarian outlook was most fulfilled",¹¹ while Bentham suggested that the poor should be convinced that any condition was "as good as, ie. as favourable to happiness as any other."¹²

Smith argued for popular education to prevent the citizen from falling a victim to demagoguery and to help him judge political issues rationally. He hoped that such education would show the prudent man that it was his way of life which formed part of the 'natural' order of things, a fact which for Smith no amount of legislation could really alter.

Here the philosophical difference between Smith and Bentham on education appears deeper. Halevy clearly demonstrated that Bentham's thinking was based on two contradictory philosophical sources.¹³ On the one hand,

¹¹Feuer, L. S., The Scientific Intellectual, Basic Books, N. Y., 1963, p. 211.

¹²Bentham, J., Quoted in Manning, op. cit., p. 107.

¹³Halevy, op. cit., last chapter.

Bentham inherited an economic system that was based on the assumption of the natural identity of interests between the individual and society. On the other hand, his philosophy of law was based on a principle of artificial identity of interests in society. The former tended to minimize the need for legislative and governmental involvement; the latter, on the contrary, made room for an increase in legislative action in order to achieve that artificial identity of interests.

If we accept Halevy's thesis the difference between the philosophical basis of the educational views of Smith and that of Bentham becomes clear. Smith minimized the role of the legislator in education. Although he did give the legislator a role in that field he did not see that role as that of an active educator. For Smith, the legislator was not so much the provider of education as the provider of the opportunity for education. Since the identity of interests was natural any teaching explicitly directed towards that end, just like any other effort aimed at an artificial identification of interests, was unnecessary. What was principally needed was the opportunity for the prudent man to pursue his self-interest better. His education, therefore, did not have to be narrowed but expanded to allow him, within the limits of his resources, to develop his mental abilities and judgment and to apply the knowledge he acquired and the judgement he developed in his everyday living.

In addition to this, the educational opportunity that he was to be given had to be provided in a manner that would

not undermine his qualities as a prudent man. It should, instead, be provided in a way that would strengthen the sense of personal responsibility and not be forced upon him by an impersonal external source.

The function of the legislator is to see that the opportunity for such an education is available and not to provide that education. It is necessary to bear this approach to education in mind if one were to avoid a misinterpretation of Smith's recommendation for public support of education.

It is not enough simply to remark, as most historians of education have done, that Smith advocated public support of education. It is not enough to point out that Smith saw the importance of the political function of education without examining how the financing and organization of public education was to be done, indeed, how it was done in the case of Smith's own University. Otherwise one can conclude, as Brian Simon has done, that Smith advocated "'prodical' expenditure on education by the state in its own interests."

It is not enough, when one is studying Smith's theory of education, to suggest, as C. F. Arrowood has done,¹⁵ that the "unit of Smith's political thinking is the abstract

¹⁴Simon, B., Studies in the History of Education, 1760-1870, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1960, p. 139.

¹⁵Arrowood, C. F., Theory of Education in the Political Philosophy of Adam Smith, Monograph, Published Privately, Copyright by C. F. Arrowood, 1945, p. 13.

individual" without examining what qualities Smith attributed to the truly virtuous individual. The one main weakness of Arrowood's monograph is that he failed to place sufficient emphasis on Smith's ethical theory and its relation to the rest of Smith's thought. By dismissing only too readily Smith's concept of sympathy and by neglecting to deal with Smith's concept of the virtuous man Arrowood saw the teacher - student relationship in Smith's thought as nothing more than a seller-buyer relationship. This is an error committed by those who see in Smith's work nothing more than a systematization of economic thought.

If there are any closer affinities to be seen between Smith's approach to education and that of the utilitarians it is to John Stuart Mill, a later utilitarian, rather than to Bentham that one must turn.

J. S. Mill moved away from Bentham's utilitarianism by introducing a qualitative dimension in the principle of utility and by placing the ultimate moral justification in conscience. In his concept of justice and injustice, through sympathy and intelligent self-interest, he adopted a position similar to that of Adam Smith.¹⁶ In his general philosophical approach J. S. Mill moved more towards a position which placed greater emphasis on individual moral responsibility and this is reflected in his views on education. He did not dismiss State involvement in

¹⁶Sidgwick, H., History of Ethics, Macmillan, London 1906, p. 252.

education but, like Smith, he did not assign to the State the all-important educational function that the earlier utilitarians seem to have done. "An education established and controlled by the State should only exist, if it exist at all, as one among many competing experiments, carried on for the purpose of example and stimulus, to keep the others up to a certain standard of excellence."¹⁷

On the other hand, J. S. Mill seems more emphatic than Smith about the need for a universal and compulsory education but again he expresses his view in terms that might have been acceptable to Smith: "If the government would make up its mind to require for every child a good education, it might save itself the trouble of providing one. It might leave to parents to obtain the education where and how they pleased, and content itself with helping to pay the school fees of the poorer classes of children, and defraying the entire school expense of those who have no one else to pay for them."¹⁸ At the same time, the "efficiency of teaching" would be ensured "by a government inspection of schools and by a real and searching examination of pupils."¹⁹

On the question of curriculum Smith's position is closer to that of J. S. Mill than to Bentham's. J. S. Mill

¹⁷Mill, J. S., quoted in Curtis, S. J., & Boultwood, M. E. A., op. cit., p. 413.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 414.

¹⁹Mill, J. S., Letters of J. S. Mill, edited by H. Elliot, Longmans, London 1910, Vol. II, p. 106.

seems to have stressed classical literature more than Smith did, but to the question of a choice between literature and science in education Mill replied: "Why not both? Can anything deserve the name of a good education which does not include literature and science too?"²⁰ Smith also advocated the encouragement of cultural and literary pursuits together with the study of "science and philosophy" and it is not unlikely that his answer to that question would have been the same.

Finally, Smith could not have agreed more with J. S. Mill when the latter stated that "what the poor as well as the rich require is not to be indoctrinated, is not to be taught other people's opinions, but to be induced and enabled to think for themselves."²¹

In both J. S. Mill and Adam Smith it is the stress on individual freedom and personal responsibility that emerges in educational theory. Concerned as both were with society and social data they both demonstrated a bias for individualism and a hostility towards any extension of direct state involvement in education beyond what they regarded as inevitable and essential to ensure a minimum standard of education among all social classes.

If there is more stress on direct state involvement in J. S. Mill's theory than in Smith's perhaps the reasons

²⁰Mill, J. S., quoted in Curtis, S. J., & Boultonwood M. E. A., op. cit., p. 416.

²¹Mill, J. S., 'Letters', H. Elliot (ed.), op. cit., Vol. I, p. 165.

may be found more in the difference in historical perspective between the two men than in any difference in their basic philosophical approach of individualism in education. Smith saw only the beginnings of the industrial revolution and its effects and was intellectually attached to the eighteenth century and its stress on Nature. J. S. Mill, writing seventy to eighty years later, saw much more than the beginnings of that revolution and its effects and had no attachment to the eighteenth-century intellectual outlook.

The neglect of these differences in philosophical foundations has helped to identify Smith with the utilitarians in matters of education to a greater extent than would appear justified. Philosophical foundations, however, help in the formulation of one's approach to practical issues and unless these foundations are clearly established one's recommendations in practical issues may be misunderstood.

It is with this in mind that Smith's influence in educational practice must be examined.

b) The practical issues

Smith's economic philosophy minimized government involvement in public issues in general terms. When he considered this involvement in terms of specific fields of public concern, however, Smith tended to be selective. Education, as has been shown was one of the fields in which he envisaged the need for government involvement. Yet the influence of his general approach of minimal government involvement has been so great as to affect

practical educational issues in ways that he probably never foresaw and never intended.

What was disregarded in the consideration of issues of educational practice was his concept of personal moral responsibility on which both his educational theory and his economic philosophy rested. His economic philosophy was applied to issues of education denuded of its moral foundations. The result was that the substance of his educational thought was overlooked and his suggestions misunderstood. This can be seen by examining the general attitudes towards the main issues of education in the nineteenth century in England.

The educational issues which were beginning to crystalize at the time of Smith's death were issues connected with the education of the poor and the involvement of the government in education.

T. L. Jarman summarized the attitudes to popular education in England in the nineteenth century under four categories:²² The reactionaries who regarded such education as dangerous and, therefore, opposed all suggestions for a system of popular education; those who would accept such education only for religious reasons and the reading of the scriptures; those who held the utilitarian view for social and political ends and among whom would be included those who advocated the advance of

²²Jarman, T. L., Landmarks in the History of Education, Murray, London 1963, p. 245.

science, those who supported the individualistic economics and even those who combined this view with religious teaching; and, fourthly, those who held the working-class view, some of whom accepted the individualistic economics while others held anti-capitalist opinions.

If one attempted to place Smith into one of these categories his individualistic economics and the elements of utilitarianism in his theory would probably force him into the third category. Yet there are enough elements in his approach to social issues and the social significance that he saw in fiscal policy to suggest close affinities with those among the fourth group who accepted his economic philosophy.

Historians of education do not associate Smith with the last group to any extent. The main reason for this is that in the issue of public education Smith's influence can be seen primarily in aspects of economic rather than of strictly educational significance. Specifically, the emphasis on the division of labour and the ideas of competition and general restraint in public expenditure supplied arguments to those who had a business approach to education. They viewed education in terms of balance sheets and tended to oppose any form of public involvement in education beyond a certain minimum which industrial developments made necessary. Such an approach was likely to receive wide acceptance in a world which was becoming increasingly conscious of the importance of production costs and was beginning to judge the efficacy of private or public plans primarily in terms of financial returns.

This utilitarian approach tended to overlook the labour orientation of Smith's economic philosophy and the social-improvement function he attached to fiscal policy. In addition, it disregarded the significance he attached to the education of the ordinary citizen in an industrialized society. As has been shown, Smith did not advocate public support of education for narrow vocational purposes only or for 'keeping the poor in their place'. He envisaged as its consequence a greater participation in public affairs and a more intelligent consideration of public issues.

Smith's direct influence in educational issues cannot be assessed easily. Direct reference to him may not always be evident. It could be argued that the emphasis on the economic aspects of public education was merely a reflection of the changing times and not a reflection of his influence. Yet Smith's immense contribution in providing the appropriate intellectual tools for purely economic considerations of the issue of public education cannot be denied.

A few examples of the importance that was attached to economic considerations in matters of education should suffice.

Joseph Lancaster put forward an economic argument in support of his monitorial system in 1798. Under such a system, he declared, one thousand children could be provided with a sound education for not more than £200 per annum.²³ The instant appeal of such a business-like approach and the wide acceptance of the monitorial system are well-known.

²³ Richmond, W. K., Education in England, Pelican Books, London 1945, p. 65

Andrew Bell spoke in a similar vein when he said that his educational system surpassed the "mechanical powers" in "simplicity, economy, force and effect." He described his system as the "steam engine of the moral world." He maintained that "the intellectual machinery costs nothing, grows in force and efficiency, by the use that is made of it, and with the work which it has to perform."²⁴

This argument claimed to achieve what Smith would have approved from a strictly economic point of view. Yet Smith would have deplored such an approach to education. He stressed the importance of personal contact between teacher and student. He might have remarked that the cure for the social ills of the machine age and the division of labour may not necessarily be found in the wholesale application of the 'machine method' and the standards of business efficiency to the school.

The emphasis on efficiency and economy can be seen in the approach to education among some educational administrators at the highest level. The first government grant for "purposes of education" in Britain amounted to £20,000 and was approved by Parliament in 1833. James Kay-Shuttleworth was appointed Secretary of the Committee of the Privy Council responsible for the distribution of the grants to education. By the time he resigned his post in 1849 these grants had reached a total of £900,000.²⁵ In 1859 Robert

²⁴Quoted in J. L. & Barbara Hammond's The Bleak Age, Pelican Books, London 1947, p. 150.

²⁵Richmond, op. cit., p. 70.

Lowe became vice-president of the newly-instituted Education Department of the government. He was determined to revise the Code of Grants on the basis of efficiency of performance. He was convinced that reliance on endowments led only to incompetence and inefficiency. His approach was summed up in his statement in the House of Commons: "If the new system will not be cheap, it will be efficient, and if it will not be efficient, it will be cheap."²⁶

Lowe was supported by the findings of the Duke of Newcastle Commission in 1861. Its members were convinced that a "searching examination" could adequately assess whether the "indispensable elements of knowledge are thoroughly acquired." They concluded that it was necessary "to make the prospects and position of the teachers dependent to a considerable extent on the results of this examination."²⁷

By 1865 Lowe's Revised Code, with its 'payments-by-results' approach, had succeeded in reducing government grants to £636,000 per annum.²⁸ Whatever the administrative and economic benefits derived from such efficiency, "the unforeseen by-products of the Code when unimaginatively

²⁶Balfour, G., The Educational Systems of Great Britain and Ireland, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1903, p. 16.

²⁷Armytage, W. H. G., Four Hundred Years of English Education, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1965, p. 124.

²⁸Balfour, op. cit., p. 17 footnote.

construed, led to many unfortunate practices. The cult of the 'register', acquiescence in large classes, the deliberate cultivation of rote-memory to defeat the inspector; even, we are told, the presentment of sick children for the attendance grant could not, in many cases, be stopped."²⁹

Adam Smith also saw the need for efficiency in education but he used a different criterion. His criterion of efficiency in education was not based purely on the amount of funds disbursed but on the extent to which the educational institutions promoted the advancement and expansion of knowledge. He did not advocate either the preservation of the 'status quo' in knowledge or the restriction of public education in order to minimize public expenditure on education. In the nineteenth century many who were basically hostile to the expansion of public education reluctantly accepted it as inevitable. Instead of opposing it outright they channelled their basic hostility into the practice of assessing the appropriateness of public education and the benefits to be derived from it in terms of economic efficiency and examination results. It is not perhaps unlikely that this was the case with the Newcastle Commission whose conclusions were criticized by Kay-Shuttleworth. G. Kitson Clark suggests that the Newcastle Commission was

²⁹Armytage, op. cit., p. 125.

"probably steered by men in some ways hostile to the system."³⁰

There were, of course, other issues at stake in the development of public education such as the struggle between Church and State and the conflict between the Church of England and the Non-conformists. The fact is, however, that the economic approach to public education was widespread and deepseated. Smith himself contributed in this to a considerable extent. He did so by incorporating most of his views on education in a vast work of primarily economic significance, by using the failures of public education in Scotland in his day as an illustration for his economic ideas and by failing to deal with educational issues in a more systematic way.

Smith's approach to education was much closer to that of such men as Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, Lord Brougham, George Birkbeck and Robert Owen. These men were genuinely concerned with the expansion and improvement of education. All four came into contact, to a lesser or greater extent, with the progressive academic circles of either Edinburgh or Glasgow of which Smith had been a part a generation earlier. Smith belonged to an eighteenth-century Scottish university environment where there was a genuine concern for the individual in society which was partly geared to a concern with education. In the history of educational ideas it is with progressive educationists that Smith

³⁰Clark, G. K., The Making of Victorian England, Methuen, London, University Paperbacks 1965, p. 174.

should be more closely associated. Instead, he tends to be identified with the utilitarians and with the more reluctant supporters of public education. As has been shown above, a large part of the blame for this must rest with Adam Smith himself.

In conclusion, some points connected with Smith's educational thought, work and influence might be mentioned.

Without any implication of direct influence some of Smith's ideas could be found in later educational theorists. The stress on 'practical' education could be found in Herbert Spencer, the suggestion of the humanistic influence of science would have attracted T. H. Huxley, while the idea of a relation between knowledge and discipline would have appealed to John Dewey.

Smith was one of the founders and original members of the Royal Society of Edinburgh which was established in 1783 and which aimed at "the cultivation of every branch of science, learning, and taste". It appears that he never read a paper to the Society but he was one of the four presidents of its literary class.³¹

In a wider sense, Smith must be given credit for the influence he exercised on the development of the study of economics and its impact on social issues. By systematizing economics he did, indeed, as his contemporary Edward Gibbon remarked, create a new branch of the social sciences.

³¹Rae, op. cit., pp. 375-376.

Finally Smith's influence, clearly unintended, can also be seen in what was a development of a more normative character. He allowed for the possibility that it was part of the egotistical aspect of human nature to barter and trade. "Whether this propensity (i.e. "to trade, barter and exchange") be one of those original principles in human nature, of which no further account can be given; or whether, as seems more probable, it be the necessary consequence of the faculties of reason and speech, it belongs not to our present subject to inquire. It is common to all men, and to be found in no other race of animals, which seem to know neither this nor any other species of contracts."³²

Obviously, Smith was inclined to disagree with the view that the propensity to trade was part of human nature but he never ruled it out and, with his empirical approach, he noted the fact and made it the cause of the division of labour and material progress in society.

The impact that Smith's economic ideas had on a rapidly growing middle class in the nineteenth century needs no elaboration here. Bearing in mind this impact it is not difficult to see how his doubt about the validity of this normative aspect of the propensity to trade was easily brushed aside and that a new view of man, as a being destined by nature to trade and exchange, could come about. The fact that scholars such as J. B. Bury, in his

³²'Wealth of Nations', op. cit., Bk. I, Ch. II, p. 13.

'Idea of Progress', saw nothing but material progress as the ultimate in Smith's ideas demonstrates the extent to which such a narrow interpretation of Smith's idea of human nature became accepted.

It should have become clear in the course of this thesis that the encouragement of such a materialistic view of human nature, with all its implications for the education of man in the narrowest and widest sense, is not what Adam Smith, who was very much the product of eighteenth-century enlightenment, intended. But then, misunderstanding and misuse by successive generations is not the uncommon fate of the work of many important thinkers, and to this the work of Adam Smith was no exception.

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